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IS GOD LIMITED?

FRANCIS JOHN McCONNELL

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INTRODUCTORY

SEVERAL forces have conspired within the past few years to raise the question, "Is God limited?" The first force is intellectual, or theological. Through centuries of theological reflection the church thinkers have wrought out a conception of God as omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient. Any student of Christian doctrine who was graduated from a theological seminary a quarter of a century ago would probably reply to a question to-day asking for a statement of the characteristics of God by beginning with the enumeration of omnipotence, omnipresence, and omniscience. Recent years, however, have seen searching criticisms of all our fundamental philosophical and theological conceptions. There is not abroad to-day so much of inclination to challenge the existence of a God as of desire to come to closer grips with the terms in which the formal and orthodox theology has sought to set the idea of God forth. We say that God is omnipotent, and yet in the same breath we say that men are free. We say that God is omniscient, but protest that knowledge of all things does not interfere with a free life's

disposing of itself as it sees fit. Moreover, what does "presence" mean, to say nothing of omnipresence? We say that God is "in" all things, but he surely cannot be in all things in the same sense. Philosophic thinkers to-day are impatient, if not rebellious, toward the claims of any sort of absolutism. "Relativity" is the charmed word of the hour. William James used to say that in fighting against the God of the absolutists he was fighting for the God of the living—the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Much modern thinking bases itself on the same claim.

A second force raising the question as to a limited God is the horror in men's hearts over the Great War and its material and social consequences. Could God have willed such a catastrophe? To say yes starts questions by the score, and to say no seems to drive us to some doctrine of limitation of the divine. Taking the world over, this problem of human distress—of which the war was an extreme and acute phase—has, of course, been with us from the beginning. Only it has been with us in a form to which we are more accustomed. The majority of human beings do not get enough to eat, perhaps never have had enough. More people are swept away to death in a single flood of the Yellow River in China than were killed

in any of the greatest battles of the World War. Tragedy like this has always been familiar, but the sufferings growing out of the war have pushed the question of human pain anew into our thinking. Along with this comes the whole problem of physical pain in the animal realm. Anybody who has read Theodore Roosevelt's descriptions of African wild animals in their torture from gnats and flies which sting the most sensitive parts of the eyelids, will wonder if all this means nothing to an omnipotent Creator. Even inanimate nature is not so nearly perfect as to prevent our raising the question as to whether a Perfect Creator can reconcile that nature with any of his own perfections.

Once more, there is to-day an insistence upon the worth of human lives which asks whether these lives are not in some degree independent creators. Some of the pluralists and humanists maintain that God, while vaster than any human being can hope to be, is nevertheless finite. Only thus do they think they can maintain real independence for man. Writers like H. G. Wells seem to find this idea of a finite God very bracing. It gives them a God with whom they profess to be able to find genuine companionship.

Still again another set of thinkers are much

perplexed to-day over the difficulties involved in the very idea of personality itself. We say that God is a Person, but personality, in the only form in which we know it, seems to involve limitation. Human personality seems to be inexorably tied to some sort of physical organism, and to be subject to the law of development. While we have worked ourselves measurably free from the older and cruder anthropomorphisms we still think of limitations as involved in the idea even of a Supreme Personality. Is such a personality singly and separately personal in itself, or is it in some sense a community? Are there for such a personality limitations involved in thinking and feeling?

It is the object of this essay not to attempt anything so ambitious, or futile, as an answer to all these questions. We are concerned with the much more modest aim of indicating an attitude toward the questions which will enable the reader to ponder these perhaps a little more satisfactorily. Sometimes there is value just in seeing what a question is or in seeking the best putting of the question. Then we can better tell whether there is anything foolish or irreverent or presumptuous in our mood or method of inquiry.

The problem before us naturally falls into

three parts. Are there limitations for God in the creation and carrying forward of the material universe? Are there limitations for him in the creation of and in the relation to men? Are there limitations in the very fact that we conceive of God as a person? If there are such limitations, how are we to conceive of them so as to preserve the moral and spiritual values which are the glory of the Christian ideal of God?

I regret the metaphysical nature of some of my discussion, though I do not see how metaphysical questions can be handled without metaphysical discussion. The most confirmed metaphysicians—and the most harmful—are those who disavow metaphysics. Still, I do not suppose my readers will miss much if they skip the metaphysics, especially the pages on space and time and on the problem which has given rise to much theorizing about unity and complexity in the divine personality.

I

**ARE THERE LIMITATIONS UPON
THE DIVINE IN RELATION TO
THE PHYSICAL UNIVERSE?**

I

ABSOLUTE AND RELATIVE

SOME objections to the idea of God as conventionally taught found themselves on a play with the words "absolute" and "relative." There are those who will have it that if we are to believe in an absolute God, there cannot be any place in the divine for the relative at all. Indeed, at the hands of some teachers the difficulties of an absolute are pushed so far as to do away with all clear possibility of holding to any idea of God. Bradley, for example, in *Appearance and Reality*, holds that anything into which relations enter is riddled with contradictions, that the instant an Absolute comes into relation to anything it ceases to be absolute. There can hardly be any doubt that argument like this has been responsible for much English and American skepticism during the past quarter-century.

The skepticism, though uttered by some minds of rare philosophic skill, seems to be purely verbal. Etymologically the absolute is contrasted with the relative. In the dictionary absolute must be absolute and relative

must be relative. In life the absolute may be subjected to whatever qualifications we may agree upon. Provisionally God may be thought of as absolute in the sense that he is dependent on nothing outside himself. If that does not satisfy the definers of the absolute, what harm is there in saying that we are not shut up to the word absolute? We can use any term or terms which will make clear what we mean. There is something altogether too summary in ruling out God because we have difficulty in squaring the idea of God with a word taken in literal strictness. Just a moment's reflection will show us that if God is personal, he must think. If he thinks, he must have an object of thought. If a thinker thinks a thought, he is in a sense limited by that thought. If a doer does a deed, he is thenceforth limited by the fact of that deed—that is, if his thought moves by any sort of system. Moreover, system itself means limitation. In fact, if we are to remain on this purely verbal plane, we shall never get anywhere.

Still, there is more in this objection to the idea of the absolute than just verbal manipulation. Almost from the beginning of Christian theology there has been a demand that God be absolute, so that the word itself has come to be almost hedged about with divinity. The de-

mand of Christian consciousness, however, does not settle the problem. All the great creeds are in the last analysis just the statements of problems. "Very God of very God," and very man of very man is not the solution of the Christological problem: it is the statement of the problem. It means that the solution must recognize the full claims of divinity and humanity. It certainly does not do away with the need of interpretation and exposition. So with the legitimate demand for an absolute God. What the Christian consciousness desires is a God not dependent on anything outside himself. How far we can go in thinking of limitations on God will depend on how successfully we observe this need of self-dependence in God.

We start with the question as to whether, or in what sense, the creation of an external material universe is a limitation of God. In these chapters we attempt no formal or systematic statement of a doctrine of God. We allow the idea of God to appear as it may, starting with an ordinary assumption, and developing or criticizing the conception later, without attempting compendious or summary statement. Let us take now the customary assumption that the universe of matter in which we live is God's continuous deed. In what

sense is such a continuous deed a limitation of the doer?

Would not we expect a Doer to reveal his character in his deed? How can we escape uttering the obvious commonplace that any doer would be limited by his own character? His deed could not be bigger than himself, or stronger than himself, or wiser than himself, or better than himself. In this altogether self-evident fashion any being must be limited. Now, it is a peculiarity of our human thinking—or feeling—that we look upon any course that requires purposeful action according to reason as somehow more of a limitation upon a mind than a course which lets the mind run according to its own sweet will. Which, however, approaches more nearly the idea of a Christian Absolute—a Doer working according to reason, or a Doer disporting himself in freak or whim? The astronomer declares that in looking to the starry skies he is thinking God's thoughts after him. We shall discuss the problem of law a little more fully later—but would a lawless sky be any more suggestive of an unlimited God than a sky in which all bodies, from suns to meteors, hold to their appointed courses? It is often said of us that we make God in our own image, but it is quite significant that we

never carry into our thought of God those impulses to break loose from the ordinary round just for the sake of change which are part of human nature. There may be something ennobling in our rebelling at the limitations of our daily round, but we do not care to put our trust in a Divine Doer who would now and again break over certain fundamental limitations. The gods of Olympus, though not at all the fulfillment of the craving for a metaphysical absolute, were nevertheless free from restraint. Yet they never commended themselves highly even to the Greeks. Perhaps they were just the creations of a people desiring to rest themselves in the contemplation of a life in contrast to their own. Greek art and philosophy found their greatness in observance of limitations so great that Greek self-restraint has passed into a proverb. William Temple has said that the Greeks seem always afraid of letting themselves go. So also any intelligence that becomes highly creative is afraid to let itself go. Suppose we could come to consciousness in a universe of topsy-turvydom where everything was the expression of the fantastic. Suppose some interpreter of that universe could tell us that the lawlessness and freakishness came out of the unwillingness of the Divine Ruler of that

universe to be bound by any kind of limit. Surely, such a God could hardly win our obedience by the revelation that he was working himself out in self-realization. If self-realization in an unlimited doer leads to a crazy universe, we forthwith seek for a limited God.

This line of discussion may itself seem strange to the point of aberration, but it is legitimate as suggesting that if we are to think of a Divine Being at all, we must think of him as under some sort of limitation. If we are thinking of the etymologically absolute who is rendered limited as soon as he enters a relation, we must stop talking of him as soon as we pronounce him absolute in such sense. There is no way that he can get into touch with us. If we go on talking about such an Absolute, we get into the same absurdity as that of the Spencerians, who called God the Unknowable and then proceeded to specify quite a list of particulars in which he was Knowable. I remember once reading a work on the incarnation which took four hundred large pages to tell us that since we must hold to a Manselian ignorance of the Absolute God, there could be no way of stating an incarnation intelligibly, for in an incarnation the Absolute would clearly come within the fatal network of relationships. This was a respectable enough conclusion, no doubt, but

one could not help wondering why it required four hundred pages to arrive at so meager a result.

The truth seems to be that even the metaphysical, or, rather, the etymological, absolutists do not expect to be taken quite so literally. Even Bradley, after trying to establish that everything into which relations enter is riddled with contradiction, tries also to rebuild as reality certain values which seem to him supremely worth while. His realities are just as much riddled with relations as are the appearances, but they are excellent realities and we pardon him the inconsistency. The question with all who think of limitations in God must eventually take the form of asking, not whether there are limitations or not, but of asking how the limitations must be conceived. Perhaps it may appear that the only path to anything even suggesting the illimitable is through limitation. We may have overdone the old illustration which shows that the man who enslaves another becomes himself enslaved—the illustration of the owner leading his slave by a chain. It is evident that the man who holds the owner's end of the chain is himself in slavery. His speed is set by the speed of the slave; he may even have to halt stock-still when the slave desires to halt. He must

find food for the slave even if he has to share his own food with him. Suppose, though, that we forget about slaves and change the illustration to a tool or an instrument or a friend. It is a limitation to have to work with a tool—until the tool shows its capacity for enlarging the power of the holder. If Archimedes finally gets such a fulcrum for his lever that he can lift the world, he is not likely to complain of the lever as limiting him. The astronomer has to adjust himself to the most carefully prepared and focused lenses if he would bring the moon near through the telescope, but as his sight is endowed with the power to leap thousands of miles further than it could unaided, he is not likely to speak of lenses as limitations. Lifting the thought higher, is a musical instrument like a violin or a piano a limitation? Quite likely the struggling pupil thinks so, but what does the master think? Is the mechanism of language—not of spoken speech merely but of the glance of the eye or the quiver of the lip—all that technique that love knows—a limitation? Now, making all allowance for the difference between bungling human workers or artists or lovers and the Divine Worker and Artist and Friend, may not the universe be in the hands of God a tool or instrument or a language? In such

hands is there much reason for raising the question of limitation?

We are not quite done with the objection to limitation in God. The craving for the Absolute often takes the form of a search for some all-embracing Unity. If we follow out the suggestions in the illustrations just made use of, we lose God in all the concrete diversity. There must be some fundamental human craving if thinkers so different as Hindus and Hegelians seek to escape from the concrete to the abstract as they contemplate the actual. We have here indeed an aspect of the problem of evil which we shall mention more fully later, some thinkers identifying evil with the concrete and seeking to find refuge for God in withdrawing him into the abstract. There is no relief for the Divine in this quarter. The abstract is not in itself any more holy or innocent than the concrete. Besides, there is good reason for holding with Bergson that every step away from the concrete toward the abstract is a step away from life itself, and there is reason also for accepting Dewey's contention that the abstract is merely the instrumental which serves to help to quick and living insight. If God misses the concrete, he misses about all of life as we see it. Those who attempt to save God from limitation by taking

him out of the reach of the concrete have curiously reversed the true movement. Any normal intelligence would be more likely to think of the movement away from the concrete toward the abstract as a limitation. The deepest satisfaction comes from seeing the abstract principle take form in the concrete.

We repeat that we must ask in what sense God is absolute or limited. Some absolutisms might appear to detract from his glory. Some limitations might add to his glory. What limitations, if any, are the expression of his nature? What limitations are self-assumed? If any are self-assumed, can they thereafter be lightly cast off? We may find reason for thinking that, contradictory as it sounds, an absolutely moral God would find it necessary to work under some actual limitations. Christianity is more concerned with an absolutely moral God than with metaphysical absolutism. We are anticipating, however.

II

RELATIVITY AND THEISM

THE problem of the relation of God to space has been thrust upon theologians by the Einstein doctrine of relativity, though Einstein himself is quite likely not concerned with theology. The Einstein theory seems to have started in a search for some absolute standard of space measurement to which we can refer motion especially. Not that Einstein himself was the first to raise such question. Probably every mind at all curious has more than once asked: "Just how do I know where I am in space? Suppose I rise from a seat in a railroad car and walk back and forth in the aisle. I am walking in the car toward the west while the train is moving east, on the surface of a globe which is at the same instant revolving around an axis, flying around the sun, with its poles oscillating in a planetary wobble. If I try to locate myself with reference to the sun, I hear the astronomers say that the sun itself is moving toward some distant star, that distant star itself in all likelihood being in motion." It did not require an

Einstein to set this problem before human questioners.

As far back as 1886 Michelson and Morley made an experiment to see if the speed of the earth could not be measured with reference to the ether through which the earth is presumably rushing. Inasmuch as the ether is supposed to be a substance—rarefied indeed, but still a substance—and inasmuch as the ether is supposed to extend everywhere throughout the physical universe, it has seemed that measurement with reference to movement through the ether would be as nearly absolute as any measurement could be. In carrying out their experiment Michelson and Morley devised an instrument of mirrors by which a beam of light emitted from a lamp could be divided, one part traveling forward and back in the line of the earth's movement through the ether and the other part traveling across that path and back, at right angles to the direction of the earth's movement. It was to be expected that the part of the beam which had to travel against the pressure of the ether would return to the starting point later than the part which traveled at right angles to the earth's path through the ether and back. To the amazement of the experimenters, and to the bewilderment of scientific students since who

have performed the same experiment, both parts of the beam were reflected back in exactly the same time. To all tests there was the same result—light seems to move with equal speed going squarely against the ether and across the ether.

The explanation of this phenomenon most commonly accepted has been that of a Dutch physicist named Lorenz to the effect that as the earth rushes through the ether everything connected with the earth is shortened in the direction of the movement, the measuring instruments included. Lay a measuring rod across the direction of the earth's motion and its length will not be affected. Lay it in the direction of that motion and the length will be less because of pressure against the ether. According to a system of equations which the holders of this view have worked out, the shortening would be just enough to account for the Michelson-Morley experiment's making the light appear to run at the same speed across the ether as against it.

Now enters Einstein. Whether he really accepts the Lorenz actual shortening of measures or not I cannot say. Dr. Charles Nordmann, astronomer connected with the Eiffel Tower at Paris, a foremost expositor and advocate of the Einstein theory, says that Einstein

does not accept such actual shortening. He even declares that the whole question as to whether there is an ether at all or not is indifferent to Einstein. Still Einstein does seem to me to accept the shortening, but he manifestly does not build upon it. His own explanation can be suggested by an illustration. Suppose an observer to be standing beside a railroad track while a long train is passing. If he had instruments fine enough to make the required measurements, he would see that the ray from the front end of the train—the end moving away from him—left that front end while the front was in a position nearer him than it is now, while the ray from the rear end, traveling with the advantage of coming from an approaching object, meets the front end ray in the observer's gaze in such fashion as to produce, not a shortening of an actual material object, but the same result as the Lorenz shortening of the space measurement of the observer. Hence light always seems to go at the same speed, through the shortening of the units of measurement.

Whether we follow Lorenz or Einstein, we are at once introduced to the notion of relativity to which Einstein has devoted his thought. Our knowledge of motion in space is relative to us, either because our material

measures shorten in our hands without our knowing it, or because our light measures shorten. We can measure only by instruments that are relative to us. This, in a word, seems to be Einstein's special theory of relativity.

A good deal of the criticism of Einstein is based on misunderstanding. For example, he is reported to have said that only twelve men understand him, and on this basis he seems insufferably conceited. All that statement means is that to carry his mathematics through Einstein had to invent what is called "a powerful theory of tensors." The mathematics are not so difficult as to be beyond the understanding of all but a few men, but the mathematics are not familiar. That is all Einstein seems to have meant. Again, a deal of crazy speculation has gone on about Einstein's "four dimensional continuum," as if Einstein meant a four-dimensional space in which ghosts dwell or in which a gymnast might turn himself inside out and not interfere with any vital function. All that Einstein meant was that to get behind appearances to realities in space we have to use not only the three dimensions of space but time as well, and that clocks are as necessary for space measurement as are terms of mile lengths. Again, it has been made out that a traveler flying with the speed

of light away from the face of a clock to which he could always look back would know no time, for the hands of the clock would always appear to stand still, simply because a light ray starting later from the clock could never overtake him. There would be nothing to hinder such a flyer from knowing before-and-after by the succession of states of his own consciousness however. He might suffer pain in his flight, and if he had consciousness at all, he would have enough sense of time to know that there was a moment before the pain began and a period after it ceased.

The theory of relativity means that for observers in conditions that permit the use of the same measures those measures are practically valid for such observers, but that they do not yield results at all capable of being called absolute, or that have better claim to be called final reality than the findings of observers looking upon the same events from the point of view of another system of reference or measurement. A movement of a star in space might seem to one set of observers to be in a circle and to another set of observers using a different reference frame to be in an ellipse. One observation is as true as the other. Neither is in any sense absolute; each is relative to the system of the observer.

The general theory of relativity as stated by Einstein carries his idea a step further. Just as we have been accustomed to think of the ether as an all-embracing somewhat of an absolute character, so we have been accustomed to think of gravitation as an everywhere acting force with a claim to absoluteness. According to Newton's law gravitation acts according to a formula valid throughout the entire material universe. Einstein holds that gravitation itself must come within the network of the relative. He can see no difference between gravitation and any form of motion accelerated at the same rate as the movement of gravitation. Here comes in his doctrine of non-Euclidean space. For Newton there was one infinite space with one universally valid formula, the geometry of the cosmic system being that of Euclid. For Einstein there are gravitational fields around material masses, these masses exerting a crinkling or crumpling effect in their vicinity, so that lines which we have hitherto thought of as straight are no longer straight but curved. The material masses curve and twist and jam space itself so that the simplicity of the Euclidean formulas no longer avails. Out in the farther spaces away from the great masses the Euclidean geometry holds, but not amid the space-

strains and stresses in the neighborhood of huge globes like the sun. There a non-Euclidean geometry, especially one based on curved lines rather than straight lines, is more useful. The all-embracing gravitation breaks up into gravitations relative to the masses affecting the spaces. Bodies in motion move no longer in straight lines but in whatever lines the twists of space put upon them.

I know how self-contradictory all this sounds. It seems to make space itself something that can act and be acted upon—in other words, to make space a substance. It is always fairest, however, to judge a theorist not so much by what he actually says as by what he is driving at, and Einstein's aim is clear enough, no matter how grievous the contradictions of his exposition. Moreover, he is not to be held responsible for those who seem to think he has demolished the validity of the space-intuition. The psychologists who seek to make out that the human mind built up its space intuition first out of a perception of a point, then of a line, then of a plane, then of a solid, are no nearer success to-day than formerly. They have yet to show how a point can be perceived without the intuition of three-dimensional space being implicit in the perception. Psychologically the space intuition seems a unity from the begin-

ning. With this problem Einstein is not especially concerned, no matter how persistently the psychologists claim his support. It would have been better indeed if he had said curvature in space rather than curvature of space. Everything that he claims can be held just as well without the aid of dubious psychology.

On the basis of this dependence of space on material masses Einstein has made three concrete claims, two of which seem to have been established. He made the claim that the equations of the geometry based on space curvature will better account for the shifting of the perihelion of Mercury than the older equations. This seems to be conceded though not unanimously. He made further the prediction that if photographs of stars whose light has to pass near the sun are taken during an eclipse, the rays will show a bending by the sun's lines of space-gravitation out of a straight line to the degree his equations call for. This also seems conceded, though with some questioning. He claims that light originating in heavy bodies like the sun would have its more rapid wave-vibrations lengthened or slowed down. In technical language the spectrum of such rays would show "displacement toward the red." This has not been proved.

Such, in perhaps unintelligible sketchiness, is what I make of the Einstein relativity. There is no standard of absolute measurement anywhere. The ether will not furnish such a standard. Light has, indeed, uniform velocity because our space-time frames adjust themselves to make it seem uniform to us. (By the way, I can't see why, if gravitational fields affect light, they cannot slow the whole light movement down or mix it into a hopeless snarl.) Finally, not even gravitation can furnish an absolute standard, because gravitation and the spaces it creates are dependent on the material masses. In other words, the only absolute in the universe is relativity.

Coming now to the question of the bearing of relativity on theism, we look first at the impression the Einstein doctrine has made on two distinguished philosophic thinkers. We look first at Viscount Haldane, who is reported to have hailed Einstein as the greatest intellect who has appeared on this planet in some hundreds of years. Haldane is himself an idealist of a markedly Hegelian type. For him reality is expressed in a vast interlacing of intellectual relationships. Nothing can exist apart from thought. Things must either come within the creative power of thought or go out of existence. There is no inert stuff in things.

Recent physical studies have reenforced the doctrine that what appears to be a thing is not inert stuff at all but outcome and manifestation of force or of forces. What seems to the ordinary eye a dead lump is to the physicist a center of throbbing powers. I once stated this doctrine to a youth, who pointed to a chair and said, "How does that chair act?" This reply suggests how far beyond common-sense philosophy the most elementary physics carries us, with the present-day emphasis on atoms not as infinitesimal bits of stuff but as unpicturable centers of force.

Up to quite recently, however, the physicist has thought of space as indubitably "out there." To a degree Einstein aids the idealistic thought of space as a form of mental activity. He has imparted a vast intellectual apparatus into space relationships, making space so dependent on mind for its real existence that mind seems the most potent factor having to do with space. Anything which can be adequately seized only by a most powerful "system of tensors" must be largely intellectual in its very make-up. Haldane conceives of Einstein as having done away with space as an existence on its own account. By making it so entirely relative, at least in its measurements, to human minds Einstein seems to have robbed

space of its title to self-existence. This, of course, would be all net gain to the idealist.

So much for idealism as represented by Haldane. From Einstein he gets reenforcement for his doctrine that mind is all. Suppose, now, we look at Bertrand Russell—an avowed atheist. In the judgment of those competent to form an opinion, Bertrand Russell, of Cambridge University, is one of the foremost mathematicians of our day. He has attempted an ambitious mathematical philosophy which makes reality consist in a series of instants of existence, each just happening to be more or less like its predecessors and successors, the fundamental fact being not consciousness but these “given” instants themselves which seem to be what they are on their own account. It is difficult to state Russell’s philosophy intelligibly, but the results which Russell avows are clear enough. There is no attempt on his part to gloss over or disguise his surrender of God, freedom, and immortality, or of the constitutive activities of mind. Russell is too frank to call himself an agnostic. He is as open in his rejection of theism as in his rejection in practical life of some of the commoner moral judgments of mankind.

Now, Russell seems to find in Einstein aid and comfort for a doctrine that makes matter

practically all. I say "seems to find," for in dealing with philosophy which bases itself on mathematics all I can vouch for is my own understanding. I lay no claim to familiarity with the technical mathematical apparatus of Einstein or of Russell. Anyone, however, can understand the acknowledged results of their thinking. Russell sees in Einstein a relativity due to material facts. The relativity is that of spatial position, of the speed of various physical movements; of the laws (whatever laws may mean on Russell's system), according to which the universe (whatever universe means) proceeds. It is odd to see one who has contrived such highly intellectual mathematical creations as has Russell thus relegating mind to second place. I suppose he would allow some intellectual force as necessary for the understanding of the universe, but all he seems to need would be a passive receiving apparatus on which the forces of what we call space and time could register. I repeat, with Haldane, the Einstein relativity means intellectual construction. With Russell it means material, or at least nonintellectual, forces. Haldane makes the doctrine say, "Mind is all." Russell lets it say, "Matter is all."

Every great human theory probably thus contains contradictions within itself. It seems

to me that there is a fundamental contradiction in the Einstein theory. When Einstein begins his expositions he seems to be laying such stress on space and time as merely human conveniences as to warrant the Haldane conclusions. Not that Einstein follows Haldane, or even reads him for that matter. I am not able to find in Einstein anything that suggests any conscious yielding to the Hegelian idealism. Before we reach the end of the Einstein statements, or, rather, when we pass away from the special theory of relativity to the general theory, we find not that space is a mere piece of humanly contrived machinery, but that it is the product of material masses. In other words, read Einstein up to a certain point and you are with Haldane; read from that point on to the end and you are with Russell.

A more objective type of idealism than that of Haldane would not find it impossible to reconcile whatever elements of worth there may be in both these opposed points of view. The idealist can consistently maintain that all reality is constituted in thought and by thought, and that space is the mental form by which an objective world is seized. He could make the objective nature of that world, on the other hand, as independent of any finite mind as does Russell, while at the same time

maintaining that a Creative Mind is back of all things acting out thought under the form of space.

Einstein himself does not raise the theistic question. There is no reason why he should on the basis of the argument from which he proceeds, but his expositions do at times suggest the conclusion that merely finite minds are all, and that the space forms have a significance for these minds in the relative sense which gives his doctrine of relativity its meaning. There is nothing in Einstein, however, to forbid or even to discount theism. Conceivably an Intelligence can exist which could hold in mind a larger number of such relationships than an ordinary untrained intellect. The physicist will, of course, have it that all material points in space are constantly changing relations to all other points through intricacies which no mathematical apparatus in man's power can grasp. The theist finds it easier to believe that an all-grasping Intelligence can solve these equations than that matter itself can solve them. It rather affronts our good sense to think that matter itself can more exactly solve intricate mathematical equations than can Intelligence.

There is nothing in the Einstein doctrine of space which would deprive the theist of the

right to think of the Divine Mind as absolute in relation to space—absolute, that is, in the sense of complete knowledge and mastery. If space is a peculiarity of things, the Creator of the things is the Creator of space. If the things are forms of activity, the Agent of the activity acts in such way as to make them appear in space. If space is a mental form, the Creator of minds is the creator of the mental form. I do not know that Einstein is a theist, but his doctrine of the relativity of motion in space, or of space itself, may be entirely sound as relates to finite minds, and yet not be inconsistent with the assumption of a Mind beyond the finite.

If we accept the idealistic conception of space, we can conceivably hold to a higher relativity of space itself. If space is a mental form there is no reason why there may not be many spaces besides the one in which we live. The individual mind itself has many spaces: there is the space of our common experience, the space in which our bodies move and have their being. There is the space of our day-dreams and of our dreams in sleep. The spaces of sleep dreams are at times hardly distinguishable from our space of wide-awake experience. The spaces in which the maniac lives are real to him, though they may abound

in seas and deserts and mountains which no one else has ever seen. To ask if these spaces in our minds ever collide is to talk nonsense. There seems indeed a vast difference between these spaces of imagination and the space of actual life. Suppose, however, that we lift the problem up to the Divine Mind. The space we see has a reality which comes out of its being independent of ourselves. It is common to us all. May there not, however, be in the Divine Will and Mind possibilities of other spaces independent of us, but to which we might conceivably be introduced? Other spaces than the present cosmic space might be open to prepared intelligences. Then the space a man lived in might be relative to his stage of development or mental grasp. All this seems fanciful, no doubt, and is confessedly extreme, but we are anxious to show that there are no inherent necessities that chain a Divine Will down to the system of things as we see them. To ask "where" these spaces would be would get the answer, "In the Divine Will." To ask if they would not contradict or collide with one another would be like asking me why the Dickens world, and the Shakespeare world, and the Cervantes world do not jostle one another in my mind.

We admit that the above sounds farfetched,

even though it be legitimate. There is, however, so much attempt these days to fasten the Divine Mind down within limits that it may be permissible to hint that while some limits are essential there are other considerations in the Divine Life that may throw unsuspected doors wide open. To take a single illustration, some of the present-day theorizing about the immanence of God seems to be intended to shut God in the present spatial system. We can understand such tendency as a reaction from that doctrine of the transcendent which put God at a distance. Still it is a relief to be able to think that God is transcendent in that he is not necessarily shut up to any one system. He can be conceived of as immanent in all systems there are, or may be.

A word of caution. In our attempt to keep God free from subserviency to the spatial universe which is his continuous deed we must not take him from the system in such fashion as to deprive him of the vision which would confront an ordinary pair of human eyes. In our anxiety to keep God superior to space we are often likely to speak of reality as lying behind space. We say that the real world stands in the unpicturable activity of the Infinite, or that mental forms are a sort of

spectacle through which we look out on the world, the actual world being something quite different from the view through the spectacles. We should check ourselves here with the reflection that, unless spectacles are used merely for sport or amusement, they are intended to get us nearer the facts. In our struggle to free God from unworthy limitations we must not shut him out from the view which makes the world glorious to us. He that framed the eye, shall he not see? He that made the mind so that it seizes the glory of the world under the space form, shall he not have whatever vision there is through the space form? Whatever may be the unpicturable activities of the Infinite, the picturable activities likely bring even more joy to him than to us. Probably even God enjoys pictures.

Again, we must not think of mental forms as something that can be put off or on like our fancied pair of spectacles. Spatial activity may be an essential to the Divine Mind rooted in the nature of mind itself. We are not to think of God as if he were saying: "Go to, now, let us think spatially," and later, "Let us take off these forms and look at things unspatially." In some forms of thought God may no more be able to think unspatially than to disregard his own nature. We do not help the thought

of God's freedom when we make space unreal. We may clear ourselves of some baffling limitations when we attempt to define the nature of that reality as mental. Then God is dealing not with a vast actual space which he can never surmount or escape. He is a thinker and doer with part at least of his activities taking the spatial form.

III

A WORD ABOUT TIME

IF it is hard to make out a case for the substantial reality of space, it is fully as hard to make out a like case for time. In spite of our rhetoric about the wasting tooth of time, and about the way "time will tell," time does not consume anything nor does it tell anything. It is the events that occur in time that consume or that tell. When we think of persons as limited by time, we think of the wear and tear that comes with what we call age. Hardly anyone would hold that any sort of divine being is subject to an ageing process.

Time, like space, is most satisfactorily thought of as a mental form, unless we are to hold that it is an elemental something which, on its own account is, and yet has no mark of substantial reality. We are not, however, to think of it as a form which the mind can put on or off. So far as we can see time is inherent in the nature of mental process itself. It cannot be built up out of anything else. Any attempt to explain it assumes it at the outset. Some hopeful psychologists have tried to make

us believe that intelligences with a knowledge of a point could build up a knowledge of a line and from the line could arrive at a knowledge of planes and cubes. Even here it is easy to see that three-dimensional space is implied in the perception of the point. Moreover, we have now three-dimensional space and nobody has yet added to that a fourth dimension which we can grasp as part of our ordinary perception. Einstein's fourth dimension is not an addition to the space intuition but is time and calculations as to the times of perceptions. If we have difficulty in trying to build up the space perception, we have all the more difficulty in trying to build up the time intuition out of anything else. All such attempts pre-suppose the thing to be explained. Time is ordinarily measured by a movement in space, but movement implies before-and-after. We have been told that if we had not some spatial way of measuring time we might not come to the consciousness of time. This seems hardly reasonable in view of the fact that we all experience succession in mental states. A man might have a severe neuralgic pain, followed by freedom from the pain. He could know before-and-after as applied to the consciousness of the pain. No: there is, in our experience at least, no

escape from the before-and-after of the time-form.

One of the age-old debates of theology has had to do with freeing God from the limitations of time, as witness the search for an "eternal now." It is true indeed that the debate has turned largely around that problem of human freedom which we expect to take up in a later section, but part of the difficulty lies in the elements of the time-experience itself. One ambitious attempt declares that time is simply the process by which we seize the spatial universe. The universe is bigger than our minds, so we seize it successively, step by step. The successiveness is just a mark of the littleness of our minds. If there is an all-embracing Mind, that Mind can seize reality all in one grasp. If there were one great Eye so that all rays from everywhere focused without effort in that Eye, such grasping vision would not know the struggles of adjustment in finite eyes out of which the sense of time in part comes. No doubt this might pass as a sound enough hint as to the grasp of the Divine Mind on the spatial universe, but even here the distinctive time element is implied. If the universe stood stock-still, the sense of time might not arise, but the Divine Mind could perceive changes going on at least in the finite minds finding

their way from smaller to larger knowledge—and here we have the whole problem of before-and-after.

It is change that makes the heart of our perplexity. If we think of activity as the mark of being, we must be prepared to find change everywhere, unless we are prepared to maintain that the universe incessantly repeats itself, like a flame perennially renewed but holding always the appearance of sameness and fixity. Now, time is the form under which the mind seizes change, or perhaps even activity itself, since, as a matter-of-fact, activity so constantly changes. In what sense are we to think of God as unchanging?

If it is the activity of God which founds change, we can hardly think of the Agent as being caught in his own work. Of course it is open to the verbalist to say that a Doer is never the same after his deed as before, but that is not necessarily true of any but developing human intelligences. Conceivably, change might mean for God an ageing or running-down process. We do not recall any thinker who has advocated such significance of change for God. Or we might think of God as developing by some fundamental law of his own nature. There has been of late some little advocacy of development in God. We treat

this question in a chapter on what personality means to God. There remains another conceivability—that God eternally acts and eternally, or everlastingly, seizes the changes under a time-form essentially like ours though immeasurably superior in grasp and scope, or at least that he knows to the full what before-and-after means, no matter what other ways of knowing time he may possess.

This last view is not the strictly conventional theological utterance. Conventional theology holds to a timeless God. Of course the aim in formal theology is to break away from any such limitations for God as would arise out of putting God in a universe where time would be an all-conditioning something in itself. Even, however, when we try to make clear that time is just God's way of seizing change, there is a demand for a timeless God, a God with no before-and-after in his relation to realities of any sort. There is in such demand for a timeless God a protest against an ageing God, or a developing God, or a God likely to be taken by surprise by the unforeseen deeds of free men. Suppose, though, that for the present we stick just to the relation of God to a material universe. Can we keep the before-and-after altogether out of the experience of God? God would know all the possibilities of

the system which would be the expression of his own life. If the universe is his deed, he would know at all times what he could do. He could keep the past constantly before his memory and the future constantly before his imagination: but that would not change the fact that some things would be coming into existence and other things passing out of existence. If change means anything for him—and it would seem to mean something if being itself is activity so largely changing—time must mean something also. The metaphysician falls back upon “the unpicturable activities of the infinite.” He tells us that a timeless world must be thought and not pictured. Very likely the Author of thought itself can think anything that is thinkable, but we insist that these attempts to shut off God into the realm of pure thought—the realm of changes seized by some intellectual process of which we can know nothing, while the realm of before-and-after is merely human—we insist, we repeat, that these views are the ones that really limit God in an unworthy way. In the attempt to get an unlimited God they end by shutting him up a good deal in the dark.

All we are trying to do is to keep a certain richness and fullness in the divine life. We admit that none of this comes out of anything

except our own desire for a living God. All our thoughts of God are postulates to meet fundamental human cravings. We do not deduce God. We think about him. We are, of course, open to the charge of fashioning him in our own image; but we ourselves are the most real things we know, and in fashioning him in our own image we are thinking of him in the most real terms we can find. It so happens that the spectacle of incessant change is for weal or woe the fact which confronts us everywhere. "Condition strange, where naught abiding is but only change." It does not help us much to be told that this change means nothing to God. We are perfectly willing to concede that in the Changeless Intelligence the puzzle as old as Greek Philosophy has been solved, that in the Mind which abides across the flow of change the contradiction between fixity and change has been solved. We know enough about the way our own memories gather up and fix the changes of the past to grant all this. When, however, the theologian goes on to tell us that change means nothing to God, when he tells us that with God there is one all-grasping intuition which holds past, present and future in its unpicturable activities, we grant that this may be true but not the whole truth.

We insist repeatedly that we live in pictures, and that if God does not know anything of the before-and-after of consciousness which is so real to us, he is locked away behind the bars of estranging limitation. It is the abstract theologians who limit God.

We do not for an instant mean that any human time-grasp is equal to God's. We admit that we must employ all the devices possible which will help us to a glimpse of anything like the divine intuition. We repeat all that we have said about the divine knowledge of the utmost possibilities of the cosmic process. We will grant to the divine a power of memory so intense that the pictures of the past stand ever before his mind, and a power of visualization so great that the future is quick and vivid with life. Yet we hold fast to the significance of before-and-after for a divine intelligence. In moments of daydream or of half-awaking from sleep every one of us has had experiences which have suggested an enormous grasp on time. The mind has flitted across fifty years and seen a score of old-time friends; it has leaped around the world along the track of remembered travels; it has made for itself in a flash a new world among the stars. All this in a few seconds. Or the gaze has been fastened upon some

picture or statue or landscape or face; or the ears have been entranced by some mighty music or the witchery of speech; or the life has stood still in the presence of the beloved till time is lost sight of. With experiences like these ourselves we grant enormous increase of time-grasp to God, but we do not care to be told that time means nothing to the Divine. We wish to believe that the feeling which change brings to us of exaltation or sadness is understood by the Divine. We are protesting against the metaphysicians, emptying all the concrete out of divine experience. We do not object to being told that there are some experiences of the Divine which must be approached by pure thought and not by imagination, but we do object to the primacy's being given to the pure thought aspect. Let God's thought include past, present, and future in one sweep. The nearest we could get hold of such grasp would be in the thought of timeless meanings of past, present, and future held steadily before the mind. We cannot, however, excuse God from experience of the before-and-after, if we are not to limit him so as to make him of little help to us. For him the difference between "is" and "was" and "is" and "will be" must mean something.

Now, some one will say that a procession

of changes in the universe in a time sense real to God is hardly worthy of God. Why not? If we made God subordinate to time as something outside of himself that would be unworthy? What is unworthy in God's himself looking through, or seeing through the mental form which he has put upon us? We are certainly not trying to limit God's time measures to ours. All that Einstein could say about relativity in space can surely be said about relativity in time. What time is it? How shall we tell? By the movement of an artificial timepiece, or by the movement of the earth, or by that of a sun, or by that of a distant star? God can have any measure he pleases, provided only that he understands ours. As we said about space so we say also about time. Since activity depends on the divine will, there may be other spheres of activity than our small universe. These may have their changes and their times and their seasons.

Still, the abstract theorizer balks at the idea of God as the spectator of a changing procession! Why? Let the Divine have infinite range and possibility of combination, why should not he have part of his joy in change? Can we make him, says the shocked theologian, like a spectator at a play? Why should he be

asked to see change through mental forms of time when he knows the end from the beginning? For the same reason that any intelligence delights in a play even when he knows every line. There is delight in seeing the present fact more than in remembering it or imagining it. If the universe is tool or instrument in God's hand, he must take delight in a present achievement more than in a remembered or foreseen one. It's all up in the air, I know; but better be up in the air than in the dark. If we get a God about whom we just utter phrases into which we can put only an intellectual content, we have taken a long step toward banishing God.

The practiced reader will notice at once that we have said nothing about unchangeability in the moral sense, the unchangeability that fundamentally counts. We are dealing now, however, with God and the universe apart from man, and the moral unchangeability will be emphasized in due time.

IV

MATTER AND PHYSICAL EVIL

FROM the time of earliest Christian thinkers there has appeared off and on the notion that God is somehow limited by matter. The desire is, of course, always to save God. By the way, it is noteworthy what a large volume of intellectual effort throughout Christian history has been devoted to saving God, as well as, or rather than to saving man. Humorous as it seems, the instinct has been sound. One way to save man is to give him a worthy idea of God. So the theologians have felt that God is inherently all that Christian thought has represented him to be. The evil in the world then must come from matter. It will be understood that we are now dealing with what we call physical evil. Moral evil, and even the physical pain of man, will be attacked in the second main division, where we are dealing with the real or alleged limitations put upon God by the creation of a race of human beings.

We can have a good measure of sympathy with the early thinkers who put the burden of

evil on matter, though we sometimes wonder how theologians of that earlier day could have missed so much of the glory of the material world. Sunrise and sunset, spring and summer, the blooming of flowers, and the singing of birds must have been beautiful then as now. Still, there are other aspects of nature, and these they saw. Much of nature is unlovely, not to say ugly. Much of it, in some of its animal forms, is hideous and revolting. Many material processes are disgusting, until they are understood. It is altogether intelligible that the early apologists for God not only shrank from making God responsible for matter but that they sought to put upon matter itself the blame for evil. In their thought it was the bodily connections of men that soiled pure souls with temptation.

Later thought has made it clear that if we are to have any proper theism at all, matter cannot stand apart from God. The philosophical world takes it as an anachronism, at least, that James Martineau should have spoken of matter as a "datum objective to God." I am not sure that Martineau at bottom meant that matter is a hard-and-fast lump of stuff over against God, and there is a sense in which matter as the acted-out thought of God is objective to God; but the attitude toward

Martineau's suggestion shows how far we have traveled away from the idea of matter as a thing on its own account. Even the physicist who is not a theist, has no patience with the idea of matter as inert stuff. Matter is force, or invisible centers of force reporting themselves to us spatially. The physicist, with much inconsistency, to be sure, may think of the forces as impersonal, but he finds it easier to conceive of impersonal forces as the effective agents than of dead lumps. For the theist the forces are the continuously put-forth energies of God. It follows as an immediate conclusion that, so far as the world of matter is concerned, apart from any question as to human freedom, there is no way of freeing God from responsibility for physical evil. It may, indeed, be a limitation on God, but it is not a limitation upon him by something outside of himself. The universe is God's deed now. There is some comfort to the imagination in the thought of the world as originally set going by God, with the half-conscious suggestion that the evils have somehow crept in of themselves. Where did they creep from? If God made the world in this sense, he either knew all the possibilities or he did not. If he foresaw the possibilities, then, of course, he is responsible. If he did not, he is even more

responsible for having made a world without knowing how it would come out.

Mr. H. G. Wells has lately suggested anew the idea of a finite God as over against the material universe. Mr. Wells includes in the forces against which his God fights spiritual forces as well as material, but the essential difficulties appear in an attempt to construe the framework of the universe as Wells conceives that universe. God is an invisible Spirit warring against the evils of the universe. Mr. Wells is a fair representative of that impatient thought of to-day which rails against fundamental philosophical questions. Probably Mr. Wells would resent any question as to the plane on which the finite God and the universe meet. By his own assumption Wells rules out the thought that the universe is the creation of God—a something which has gotten away from God and then gone to the bad. Nor is there anything in the Wells treatment to suggest that God is a part of the universe which has somehow broken away from the evil and gone good, so to speak, engaged in a desperate struggle henceforth to lift the universe out of its degradation. Either of these notions—though far from orthodox—could have something to say for itself metaphysically. When, however, God and the universe stand

over against each other, independent of each other, the mind in search for unity will banish both. It avails nothing to say against this that all question as to back-lying unity is metaphysical. If the history of philosophy teaches anything, it teaches that the quest for unity is one of the master passions of the human mind. For metaphysics as hair-splitting refinement we may well share all the Wellsian scorn. For metaphysics as serious attempt to meet a deep-seated craving for unity we may well have thoroughgoing respect. Whether we have the respect or not, the craving is one of those irrepressible needs which will make itself heard whether we welcome it or not. Scores of thinkers of the Wells type rail at the Christian doctrine of the Trinity because that doctrine sins, they say, against the demand for unity. Mr. Wells has a duality which sins against unity without any of the theological attempts to satisfy unity. All we have for justification for this duality are Mr. Wells' fine gestures of scorn toward everything else. A large part of Mr. Wells' ability is as a maker of gestures.

We do not make this last remark contemptuously. In spite of philosophical shortcomings H. G. Wells has compelled a large reading public to face the dark facts of the present

order in the universe. For twenty-five years preceding the outbreak of the Great War popular theological thinking had run to a shallow doctrine of divine immanence which overlooked all the grim facts of our world. God was in all things. If one asked what it meant to say that God was in the rattlesnake, one heard talk about birds and skies and flowers in reply. There was especially a mass of smug complacency about the social order also which took no account of certain elementary considerations—of the possibility of population's becoming too numerous for the physical resources of the earth, of the apparent exhaustibility of the good things with which the optimist thought the earth to be stocked. For unwillingness to face facts the generation just preceding the Great War is perhaps without a peer in the history of human thinking. We all glided along on a swiftly increasing current, unmindful that the current was bearing us to the abyss. The skies were overhead, the grass was beautiful on the banks, the birds were singing gaily. God was in all things. Why worry?

It was the war itself which jolted us out of this easy-going optimism, but Mr. Wells was in this matter, as in many others, one of the voices showing us how deep and thorough-

going had to be the reformation and revolution of our thinking. We simply have to get away from the thought of an amiable universe smiling always in a silly and inane fashion. The optimism of the quarter-century before 1914 was that of a universe with a self-satisfied smirk. If any philosophy was called in it was that of the hopeful school of evolutionists who would have it that the world was being irresistibly carried on and up, almost in spite of itself, by a kind of reversed gravitation.

We may as well face the truth that we live in a grim universe. Just at present we look only at the hard facts of the physical universe and do not raise the question of physical pain for human beings. There does seem to be some inherent fatality in the world of things around us which makes more pain than we can see any use for. The creation of an inanimate world with no spectator but God would not necessarily raise the problem of evil. Even if much of such a world appeared to any spectator, who might be brought in, to be useless or ugly, the thought would still be pertinent that, since all this was inanimate, no harm was being done if it expressed the idea of the Creator. In a world of moral agents pain, within limits, could be justified for its educative moral value. Pain in an animal world, how-

ever, where there is no possibility of moral utilization of pain, raises an opaque mystery. No solution of this mystery has ever been offered except those that add to our sense of woe: for example, the old-time suggestion, repeated by at least one theologian in recent years, that the sin of man caused the pain of the animal creation—that since the Fall of Man Nature halts “like a limping king.” Let a traveler watch the torments of insect-bitten animals in an African forest, or a battle between tropical ants, or the pursuit of birds by snakes, and try to connect all this with the consequences of the Fall of Man! Yet this explanation is no worse than the others. We may minimize the fact of animal pain by saying that it cannot be what pain would be in a man with man’s power of looking before and after, but any one with two eyes in his head knows there is pain in the animal world. There is no explanation in terms of our present knowledge. We hate desperately to say that the Divine Creator is back of all this pain because he must be, but does it make it any easier for us to say that this pain exists because he prefers it? If I desired to make an argument against the goodness of God, or even in behalf of atheism, I think I would start with the utter hopelessness and meaning-

lessness, from our point of view, of animal pain.

I think the only starting-point toward any place of relief here comes from the suggestion of Leibnitz as to the limitations inherent in a finite system even in the hands of an infinite Worker. Such a system must be a network of compromises: some parts must be instrumental toward other parts, the good of a part must be subordinate to the good of the whole. The result in the hands even of the Infinite would be in its final outcome the best possible on and for the whole, not the best possible for each part taken by itself. The defects of all this appear at a glance. As long as the finite system stays finite there is little hope of anything final as the relief from pain. All we can hope for is the progressive improvement of the system. As long as it remains finite there must be distress somewhere. This hardly accords with the Christian hope of a final heaven.

The merit of the Leibnitzian suggestion lies in the fact that if we are to think of creation as at all the work of a rational Creator, there must be some heed paid to the requirements of system as system. One telling objection to the idealistic doctrine of God's infinite activity as the source of all things is the con-

ception of God as incessantly giving himself by an effort of will to a host of details. If God had a subconscious self, or a nervous system which did some things apparently automatically, much of the psychological difficulty in getting people to accept theism might be done away. This would not change the underlying difficulty as to why things are, but it would afford a little relief. Moreover, there is under all such feeling as this an unwillingness to have the world just the outcome of a plan which might conceivably have been changed for some other. We desire the world to come out of the best plan, or out of something like a plan so good that it becomes an intellectual necessity to the Creator to carry it out. We do not care for a Creator who shows his freedom from limitation by trying now one plan and now another. We like to think of him as shut up to the best plan. The limitation in such sense is the limitation of the best itself. We cannot well think of God as debating whether a particular man is to be created or not and then deciding not to create him, for too much debate would argue against the worth of God as planner. In other words, if a thing—or a man—is to be, there must be some evident reason for such creation in the nature of wisdom itself. This does not mean

that we are not freely created by God, but it does mean that we are not to think of one scheme as arbitrarily chosen from among others. In loose, popular speech we can say that God could have done things differently. In this we merely mean to emphasize the truth that he is not bound by a deterministic necessity, but the best always binds the free chooser. The most free of beings has no choice when he is confronted by the best. Having chosen, there is no relief from the necessity of going on through. This does not here settle nor solve anything. We do not pretend that it does, but it helps toward the attitude of faith. We assume that we are dealing with a responsible God who will be satisfied only with the best and then will carry the best through.

We do not seek to minimize the limitations which the physical universe at least seems to put on God. So far as we can see, he calls into existence consciousness—or consciousnesses—only in connection with frail organisms which cannot exist except within a range of temperature of their own of seven or eight degrees of heat—from 96 or 97 to 105 or 106 Fahrenheit. There is, to be sure, no inherent connection discernible by us between the consciousness and the organism; they simply

coexist or run parallel. Here is a limitation of the first order! Yet how little it daunts the human spirit! How readily we recognize the limitations of our own knowledge! Once we get hold of the conviction that matter is a flowing form of the divine activity, we are willing to hold it fast that there can be no separation of Will and Wisdom in the Divine Mind. His powers are not split into compartments. The Will is the expression of the Wisdom. The limitations must be such and such only as Wisdom calls for.

V

THE DECREES OF LAW

THE idea of law as expressive of the divine method in nature has met with hardship at the hands of two classes of dogmatists—the theological dogmatist who will have it that there is something so restricting and confining about law in nature that we must have some place—and large place—for miracle, and the scientific dogmatist who interprets law in such self-sufficing fashion as to leave no play for freedom and little place for mind.

The emphasis on miracle began naturally enough in the deistic days when nature was thought of as a self-inclosed system running on its own account. God had started the world going and then had stood to one side. His only method of approach to nature was to break in by forcible entry. The logic of the believer in miracle led him to insist that an event could not be miraculous unless it was evidently out of harmony with law. I once heard a belated deist argue against all attempt to trace likenesses between biblical miracles and natural processes, averring that any taint

of law ruined the miraculous character of the miracle. This sort of thing is now happily gone by. Law is a statement of God's method in doing. Miracle would be a departure from the accustomed method. Some time ago a defender of miracle spoke most oratorically of a child locked in a burning house as illustrating the urgency which would prompt God to unusual and extraordinary method in rescuing man from sin. The father learns that his child is locked in the house; the house is on fire; the father does not stop to find a key. He takes an ax and hacks down the door. So man is in need of salvation. Ordinary measures will not suffice and God resorts to the altogether extraordinary.

This illustration—actually employed by a foremost American theologian—sets forth some of the differences between the present-day conception of miracle and that of a more deistic time. It will be observed that we do not have here any departure from law. The father, breaking into a house on fire, does not set aside any of nature's laws. All he does is to use an ax instead of a key, and to hurry his work in wild fashion so that he gets in after half-a-minute's violent effort, whereas search for the key might have taken considerably longer. We cannot help suspecting that it was

the violence of the action in breaking into the house which commended it to the theologian, as suggesting the extraordinary crisis. The man who would not ordinarily break into houses with axes eagerly does so on this occasion. We are not trying to make this illustration go on all fours, but we must not forget that when theologians use figures of speech they must expect severer scrutiny of the figures than the ordinary preacher need look for. We may be allowed to remark, then, that the illustration seems to suggest a God taken by surprise. We do not get such an impression from the study of the Scriptures in their teaching about God's work in the redemption of man.

Miracle is not departure from law into the realm of lawlessness. It is possibly a setting aside of one law for the use of a higher law. We do well to keep to the word "method" rather than law. Miracle would mean that for good and sufficient reason God would use a striking, or unusual, or swift method rather than a common, or ordinary, or slow process. I do not know that there is any objection to such possibility, if we keep the notion of the arbitrary out of it. If extraordinary events accompanied the life of Jesus, let us say, they ought to accompany it by a moral necessity.

It does not add to the worthiness of the life of Jesus to have a number of extraordinary deeds done just as signs to attract attention. If the miracles are there, they should be there because they essentially belong there. It is conventional to say that Almighty God could work any sort of miracle that he might choose. A mighty defender of the faith in other days declared that he believed that God could have made a fish great enough to have swallowed a hundred Jonahs. A discerning hearer remarked that the logic of such a defense would soon do away with a God at all worth having. For the defense assumed an Almighty with whom arbitrary and almost sportive displays of strength were conceivable—a Samson-like God. Samson no doubt had his place in the world in which he lived, but his chief function was not to set forth a divine use of power.

What an odd perversion it is to think that regularity and order are marks of divine limitation! Law in the universe would to a fairly reasonable mind seem to be the mark of sanity. It is easy, though, to see how the misunderstanding comes about. Law with us is something imposed from without. We think of God's law as like civil laws which are often irksome and irritating, as if at the entrance to the kingdom of heaven we met a fussy and

inquisitorial customs agent, or military intelligence officer, or traffic policeman, or other legal nuisance necessary in this world of ours. Or we think of those laws of nature whose transgression is fraught with painful consequences to us. The stern side of law oppresses us and we half long for an occasional holiday from the law. Hazlitt used to say that he often longed to stroll out for an airing beyond the strict precincts of his conscience, and in saying this he expressed a common human craving. There is a little of the anarchist in each of us, and under our present system of society especially there must needs be a trace of anarchy, for law would never get ahead otherwise. We must be on our guard, however, against carrying such anthropomorphic cravings up to God. Miracle conceived of as a breaking away from regularity for the sake of the relief of the Divine—a sort of anarchic vent—is hardly the best provision for freedom for God.

Since laws are God's ways of doing things, we would expect him to use the best method in a particular case for the accomplishment of a desired result. Still, we must not lay down schedules for God's activities. We must take things as we find them. In thinking of miracle, however, we shall insist that God is not so limited by the laws which express the nature

of his life that he must depart from these into a lawless realm. There might be one transcendent fact in the universe of unique significance. It might be that for this one fact there should be an accompaniment of events in the world of nature altogether unlike anything before or after, on their face a departure from or reversal of customary natural processes. Even in this case there would not be departure from law, but from a law or laws. Such words as these, however, are never to be taken for a wholesale and uncritical endorsement of miracle. The attempt to explain miracles naturally is not always moved by a spirit of hostility to Christianity. Attempts to show that some miracles are misunderstood natural occurrences, some the product of figurative speech, and some the outcome of legend-creating processes are not necessarily attempts to get rid of God. They may be honest efforts to understand God's deeds as all conditioned by the system of laws which are the expression of his wisdom. More and more the test of the credibility of miracle as departure from the accustomed method will come to be fitness with the divine character. Christian consciousness, rather than strict historical criticism, will be the final judge. Before this spirit of reverent reflection on the character of

God a resurrection-appearance of Jesus to his disciples will quite likely be put upon one plane and the story of Peter's finding the shekel in the fish's mouth upon another. The aim of such study will be, we repeat, not to shut God into a closed-and-tight scheme of nature, but to make nature full and flexible enough to be the adequate method of the divine work and to free God from the necessity of leaping outside the laws for the accomplishment of his purposes.

The other type of dogmatist is scientific. Even when he does not deny the existence of mind back of all things he ties that Mind so tightly down that freedom of action is out of the question. A good deal of this dogmatism is narrow. If law is to rule everywhere, it must rule in the operations of finite minds indeed, but the dogmatist is likely to put the stress so on physical processes that mental processes are entirely left out of the account. This dogmatist prides himself on what William James calls tough-mindedness. On close examination such a scientist is seen to be most notable for a lack of mental flexibility. The material processes in themselves may be just the framework on which a higher law—a law of meaning—may work. So that the wisdom which sees nothing but these is like a gazer

upon a house in process of building who would refuse to see anything but the foundation, or the handler of a tool who would refuse to ask what the tool was for, or a manipulator of musical instruments who would refuse to listen to music. There is nothing but dogmatic insolence in this attempt to limit the most real elements of the world to the material processes which can be seized by instruments of measurement.

Another dogmatism which tends practically to limit our thought of God is that of a type of thinking current in a particular day which gets hold of a single law or principle and makes that explain everything, so that if we are to speak of God at all, the spirit of a time demands that we speak of him in the terms of the principle which is in fashion at that hour. In the last fifty years, for example, evolution has been the charmed word. We shall speak of evolution more fully in the next chapter, but we remark that for half a century God has had to come within the scope of evolutionary philosophy or go out of existence for those who can only see one principle or law at a time. It may be that the way to make the most of a newly discerned law is to push it to extremes in order that we may the more quickly bring to light its limitations. It may be that those

of us who are always insisting upon bringing in the modifications and qualifications of a law are not of soundest intellectual balance after all, and that those are wiser who push the principle to its extreme application, so that the principle may more quickly find its place in the scheme of things. In the realm of physical discovery how often have we heard that this or that discovery or invention is epoch-making. New applications of electricity, wireless telegraphy, X-rays, radio-activity have within the memory of persons not yet old been hailed as revolution-makers. The years go by however, and each of these discoveries, pushed to its utmost, reveals its own limitations and quietly takes its appropriate place in the scheme of things. So that the religious thinker need not be excited if in every generation, or every decade, the scientist gravely tells him that if he is to speak of God at all, he can only do so under the terms of such and such a scientific principle. Nor need he get too much excited when some idolater of present-day science comes along and tells him that all ideas of God born before the present scientific era must be thrown over as hopelessly out of date. Such idolaters will have it that up to a century ago philosophy—especially on the theological side—and science were on the same plane of value; that while

science has gone leaping ahead by long bounds, all other realms of thought remain back where science started, where men called in witches to account for phenomena of hypnotism and where they sought to cure all manner of disease by blood-letting. Another explanation, however, is even more plausible, namely, that philosophy had run so far ahead of science in doing the preliminary work which made science possible, that it has taken science a hundred years to catch up. The minute a scientist begins to talk elementary philosophic principles he is likely soon to show us that he is still back with the Greeks. It is unusual if he shows that he has come down the ages as far as Kant. Sometimes he shows that he is still back with the medicine men.

We do not, however, seek to disparage science. We simply point out the folly of the notion that the discovery of law in the universe means a limitation of the Mind of the Universe. We have been told repeatedly that the modern scientific conception of law can find no place for Free Creative Intelligence. This in face of the philosophical commonplace that all Freedom would mean would be the power of choice between different ways of acting! How strange it all sounds! With law conceivable as the statement of methods by which an

Agent acts, we are told that the methods are so much more powerful than the Method-Maker that hereafter the Maker is bound in the fetters of his own methods! The Maker of the law is enslaved thereby. Everywhere in our limited world the mastery of law and obedience to it are the path to the largest liberty. We are at least in line with our own experience in suggesting that God may find his liberty through the law which expresses his wisdom.

VI

EVOLUTION: MASTER OR SERVANT?

THE great word in which everything divine or human has had to find its law for the last fifty years has been "evolution." At first evolution promised to take over the entire field to itself, and, spelled with a big E, it was hailed by some and feared by others as the supplanter of God altogether. When, however, a few gaps appeared here and there in the steps of ascent, the theists took heart as they began to feel that God might be found in these gaps. Little by little the atheistic gust began to subside and men found that the new system could be described as the method by which the Creator moved through the creative process. Even to-day, though, we are told that evolution, in one form or another, is the final word. God himself must move from simplicity to complexity through successive differentiations and integrations.

There can be no doubt that evolution, held without dogmatism, is a help to a better thought of God. It does for the cosmic time measures what the overthrow of the old Ptole-

maic system did for the space measure. The modern astronomical thought vastly increases our thought of God by setting before us such immense distances for contemplation. Possibly a phrasing of a geo-centric system could be contrived which would be useful enough for all practical purposes. The Ptolemaic system served, and served well, for a thousand years. We commend to the consideration of the pragmatists the possibility of working out a set of nautical and navigation tables on a geo-centric basis which in a rough way at least would be all we would need for workaday life; but now that we are away from the fear of the distances, we would not give up the helio-centric system for anything except something bigger. When we surrender ourselves to contemplation we prefer to have something worth contemplating. I would sooner have a finite God, conceived of as the Maker of the present astronomical system, than an Infinite God taught in terms of the old Ptolemaic astronomy. Imagination needs help in thinking of God and modern astronomy surely helps the imagination. Another aid to the imagination came with finding that the heavenly bodies were of the same stuff as those we stumble on in a ramble on a summer afternoon. The fact that the same chemical elements compose the more

distant stars whose light can reach us makes the imagination feel a little more at home in the universe. Finally, the realization that the common forces of the earth which we see at work every day have been the effective tools in building the world adds new dignity to the commonplace.

The theory of evolution helps us in somewhat the same fashion. It gives our minds a chance to stretch themselves with new time standards. It provides a thread of continuity running through creation. It gives us comfort as we think of a steady God. It gives us confidence as we see plans beginning to unfold whose factors were thousands of years in preparation.

Let us ask, however, how much worth there is in the half-century-old attempt to fasten everything divine into evolutionary terms, and to rule out all that does not fit into a current formula. May we suggest that the evolutionary process, so far as we can make out from the expositions of the scientists, is not the one simple fact that the formula itself would imply. Darwin began with natural selection as the one determinative force, but the fate has overtaken natural selection which overtakes every scientific discovery—natural selection has found its place among other forces. Even if

natural selection were all that the Darwinians claimed for it, the problem of what Jacob Schurmann called the "arrival" of the fit would still be even more consequential than the "survival." Selection in any case presupposes given factors from which the selection is made. Somewhere, no matter how far back we push the preparation, there must have been some preparation to meet the tests of the selection, or some factors must have been inherently fitter than others. That word "inherently" would in such case suggest a veritable nest of tough questions. Again, some schools have maintained that there is an immanent law in organisms which makes them run true to form generation after generation in spite of environmental changes. Whatever struggle for survival there is must be down in the dark mysteries of germ plasm. Once more, some evolutionists seem to hold that all progress is regular and steady in time; others, that events come to crises or focusing points. A corner is turned, and in a century there may be more manifest progress than in preceding thousands of years. This would seem to be in line with organic progress everywhere. A mechanically uniform rate of progress is out of the question in a growing plant or a growing animal. I profess no technical knowledge of evolutionary

processes whatever, but anyone who can read a scientific magazine can discern the multiplicity of the evolutionary factors at work as made evident by the multiplicity of the evolutionary schools and partisans. Probably each of the partisans thinks his own principle is the only one, but the layman's judgment that the truth is to be found in a proper cooperation and adjustment of them all is sure to be nearer the truth.

We put all this down just to show that there is nothing in the doctrine of evolution to tie the divine activity down to a hard-and-fast formula. If there is any one formula which, except in the most general terms, will describe evolution, I do not know where to look for it. Movement from the simple to the complex is continually accepted as near the center of evolutionary truth, but are we sure that movement from the simplex is always progress? A human inventor at work on a machine is likely to find that his first models are too complex and that his aim should be at simplicity. The assumption that at the earliest time which imagination could reach—at the time when we can think of the evolution as beginning—everything must have been simple is a terrific strain on the understanding. If everything was starkly simple, it is hard to

see how there could have been any start toward complexity, if we are to look just at the operation of the forces themselves. Of course, if a Mind is back of all, the multiplicity and complexity of that Mind itself will at least find expression in the multiplicity and complexity of the cosmic process. There is, however, no particular reason for limiting the Mind to a search for complexity.

Nor must we surrender, in the adherence to any or all forms of mutually adjustable evolutionism, to the belief that the worth of processes is to be judged by their origins. One of the strangest oddities in human thinking is the craze, which has come over the world since the announcement of the evolutionary theory, for explaining everything in terms of origins. Here, again, there is aid to our minds in the stretching that comes from a long-time process. It adds to the worth of ideas and things to see how far back their roots run. It is not quite fair either to dismiss the evolutionary emphasis on the origins of ideas and processes as a test of their worth with the remark that the logical validity of anything is to be determined not by its origin but by its own consistency. This might do for wholly logical processes like those of mathematics; but not many wholly logical processes, or

unmixed logical processes, are to be found in the cosmic movement. Processes in evolution are likely to be matters of practical adjustment and a knowledge of their origin and history is of large value. To be always looking backward, however, toward the point of origin is hardly in keeping with that practical wisdom which we call good sense.

To hear some evolutionists—even theistic evolutionists—talk, one would think the Creator to be shut in just to the elements with which he started, without an ounce of power to add anything or to make a new start anywhere along the line. Now, either everything was in the cosmic forces in the beginning—potentially, of course, or there have been fresh and fresher additions. If we had nothing but primordial star-dust, or gas, to start with, that is all we have now. Let it be granted that the sum total of physical energy in the universe remains a constant quantity. It will also remain a constant quality unless these energies, in their total supposedly constant, are made use of for the setting forth of higher and higher forms of life and of meaning. All a self-existent total energy might conceivably do would be to remain perpetually constant to itself. It might change its combinations, but that would be all. If it was a total of energy

at the beginning, it would remain a total of energy at the end. That would be all.

This shatters itself on the fact that mind, even if limited to reading the process and seeing in the process the story of its own littleness, arrives at the paradox that by seeing its own nothingness it has revealed its superiority to the physical process. This is the paradox to which such reasonings bring us: the mind reaches out through millions of miles of space and finds nothing but the physical at work. It reads the records of millions of years and finds in its lowly origins the story of its own worthlessness! If it is true that the whole universe has passed sentence on mind as impotent, mind is the only force in the universe potent enough to discover its own impotence. By this time the farce of using intellect anti-intellectually is complete.

To get back to the question of judging all by beginnings. Everything was in the beginning, there in the mind and plan of the Creator. Evolution means that, in creating, God has had regard to a before and to an after of stupendously long reach. The old, old illustration tells us that a force let loose in the universe is like a stone dropped in a pool: the ripples do not stop till they have touched the farthest rim. Similarly with time. A long "before"

leads up to the setting of the stage for the dropping of the stone and a long "after" carries its effects down through the ages: but we must not overlook the importance of the dropping of the stone, the free act for which the "before" is a preparation and the "after" a continuation.

Evolutionists have been given to befooling themselves with the fancy, born of the crudest sense-imagery, that little variations are less truly variations than big variations. No variation, in the sense of the introduction of a new factor qualitatively above what has gone before, is a possibility without a breach of that continuity which is so sacred to the evolutionist. From *a* to *x* would be to the evolutionist a breach of continuity. From *a* to *b* would be observance of continuity. Yet there is conceivably an infinity of gradations between *a* and *b*. What evolution calls for is regularity between the "before" and the "after." For the theist *a*, *b*, *c*, etc., is a description of the more or less regular program which the Creator has followed in the successive steps of creation. There is nothing in the⁹⁷ doctrine of the conservation of energy to forbid the progressive introduction of newer and newer factors. All the doctrine would call for would be that they use the energies already existent. It may be,

though, that the doctrine of the conservation of energy is not the last word as to the forces of the physical universe.

Up to a few years ago there was a popular interpretation of the evolutionary theory which made it incurably optimistic, so optimistic as to threaten the sovereignty of a moral God. The Christian idea of God has always been of a covenant God, that is to say, a God of agreements—that if moral courses are followed good results will follow. Of course we have here for the moment stepped over into the social realm. In this realm we were told that an upward moral movement was sweeping us on in spite of ourselves. The events of the last eight years have pretty well knocked this notion to splinters. There is nothing to hinder the idea that God could change the whole direction of national or social progress, in accordance with the moral deserts of the nations, without at all getting out of gear with strict evolutionary formulas. It is significant that since the Great War we have heard less about the struggle for existence and more about mutual aid as the correct interpretation of the evolutionary movement. All of which suggests how flexible the whole theory is.

Some puttings of the theory rather crudely

allow us to infer that species, or similar groups, are the chief elements which result from the evolutionary process. Darwin began the talk about species, but species are not necessarily the worthiest objects of study. Asa Gray was once asked if he believed in transformation of species. He replied that he did, inasmuch as by mere classification he had transformed so many himself. The practical botanist does not find the mutation of species impossibly hard. After all, it would be a limitation if we had to think of God as so concerned about species that he would forget individuals. The individuals are not to be used as instruments for species. It is the other way around. The species are for the sake of the individuals. Evolution ought not to be allowed to limit God's concern to types.

We conclude that evolution has to be held loosely and with open mind when we are thinking of the relation of the world to God. There is a richness and diversity about the actual universe which any close formula is likely to miss. James Bryce makes a casual remark in his *Impressions of South America* to the effect that all sorts of types in nature presumably produced under diverse environmental conditions, get along happily side by side in the same environment now. This re-

mark deserves more attention than it has received. The Creator has managed to crowd into the world an astonishing wealth of diverse life in defiance of what strict evolution would seem to call for.

II

**ARE THERE LIMITATIONS UPON
THE DIVINE IN RELATION TO
THE WORLD OF MEN?**

VII

THE PANTHEISTIC PANACEA

ONE of the reasons often assigned for belief in pantheism is that it brings a freedom into our thought of God which we can never reach so long as we hold to the independence, in any substantial sense, of finite personalities. The finite personality is indeed the rock on which pantheism is most likely to go to pieces. There are, after all, few holders of deism to-day outside of untrained or half-trained thinkers, so that there is little objection to pantheism from the point of view of God's relation to the material universe. If the universe is God's immediate and continuous deed, God is in his universe as a Doer is in his deed—which is essential pantheism. We meet some difficulties when we try to think through God's relation to the animal world, below man, but we have that difficulty on any theory. A recent pantheistic writer gave it as his view that the difference between a man and a tiger is that in man there is a fuller indwelling of God than in a tiger! Suggestions like this warn us that we would better be content to leave some

things in the realm of mystery, whatever our theory.

Again, let us concede to the pantheist that in the finite soul God is part agent. There is no relief for our philosophical difficulties, as we shall try to show in the next chapter, in attempting to set finite souls off in complete independence of God. We may possibly concede to the pantheist that all in the finite soul is God's doing—except the choices which the man makes. Even here the choice is between different laws which all express the divine thought. We concede too the immense relief to the imagination if we can believe that all men are phases of God's activity, or that human consciousness is one of the windows through which the Divine Mind looks out—or in—, that we are waves of a mighty sea, or islands in a sea under whose waters all islands are one. For poetic and even worshipful purposes much of this is legitimate. It seems to lift God out of the difficulties which surround the notion of finite free wills and to give him a liberty which adds stimulus to the contemplation of the worshiper.

It used to be urged with more effect than to-day that pantheism breaks down the distinction between truth and error, between good and evil. Every thought, every impulse is

alike divine. There is as much sacredness in what we call sin as in what we call good. I do not think that the deadliness of this criticism against pantheism has ever been overcome. Pantheism unloads all the human mistakes on the Divine, and the distinctions between saints and sinners lose their point. God is not liberated. He is weighed down with a mass of evil. Holiness and righteousness hardly have meaning as we contemplate him.

Before we close the case, however, let us hear the pantheist through. There is at present a deal of pantheism in the world, and probably there will be always, or as long as men debate on fundamental problems. Something about pantheism makes perennial appeal to the human mind. If there is this lasting strength in pantheism, we ought to know what it is. Let us then see how present-day pantheism meets the objection that it loads error upon God. First, the pantheist is likely to minimize the difference between physical and moral evil. He points out that we have the problem of pain with us on any theory, and that the fact of pain has never been found incompatible with belief in a good God. He points out too that in the world of nature there are many creations which do not harmonize with the idea of a wise or good God—

snakes, wolves, poisonous insects, disease-germs—and that these do not prevent men from believing in God. Men do not pretend to escape mystery on a pantheistic basis. That abides with us on any basis. We can afford to wait. We do not insist that the present order was made for us alone. Our system in some aspects seems to be made for other purposes than those that serve human needs. The world in which we live is *useable* by us, but that does not mean that it is intended solely or chiefly for us. The wisdom which is in all things and moves through all things may use this earth incidentally as a starting-frame for the souls whose chief sphere of service is to be elsewhere. In the presence of mystery and pain we may well hold fast to the hope of a dawn when the shadows shall flee away. In the light of that morning we expect to see that not even one moth has rushed into a flame in vain.

To all of this we utter a hearty amen! May we ask, however, how it meets the problem of error and evil. It may be the best we can say about pain and the enigmas of the world in which we live, but all this has been said by the believers in human freedom. The fallacy lies in confounding physical and moral evil. Evils of errors and sin do have consequences of

physical pain, but pain is not moral evil or error.

The pantheist bravely replies by taking up the problem of error. Error is not a free man's departure from an absolute standard of truth. Error is purely a relative affair. What need is there of an absolute standard in these days of relativity? An error from one man's point of view may be truth from the point of view of another. If Einstein has made it clear to us that there is no absolute space-standard, where it would seem that such a standard would be imperative, why do we need an absolute truth-standard in any realm? May not there be a soul of truth in all apparent error?

To much of this we subscribe. There is no getting away from the fact of relativity. We admit the relativity. If everything human in us comes from God as the pantheist teaches, the craving for truth as over against error comes from God, and, having such high origin, is not likely to be disregarded. The distinction is implied in all reflection. If we cease to observe it, all earnest thinking will be paralyzed.

The pantheist returns with the rejoinder that we have the authority of the pragmatist for saying that we test truth by its consequences, by the way it works. What have seemed to be untruths—and have been untruths

by the accepted standards—have been believed and acted upon with good outcome. The crusades, the discoveries of the time of Columbus, the search for elixirs of life, the wars waged on the basis of actual lies have often worked out for good. The doctrine that a lie will lead to false results is itself given the lie by much historic fact. If the lie is told successfully enough to get it thoroughly believed, the effect is not always different from the effects of the truth.

All of this implies the distinction the pantheist is trying to get rid of. He may insist that the craving for truth is just a device to lead us out on intellectual quests. It is an appetite, but with no more guarantee that what it seeks really exists than has any other appetite. We reply, however, that we must not lose sight of the principle that there is a difference between true and false. Pragmatism, the test of truths by results, may do well enough as a means to help us in the search for truth, but pragmatism does not supply us with a final standard. If reality is that which is acted into existence by the Divine Will, or uttered by the Divine Mind, truth is the correspondence of our thought with that back-lying reality. Not that the truth in us may ever be more than partial, but it may approx-

imate to reality as far as it goes. After all the effects of a belief have been catalogued there still remains the question as to whether the belief was true or not. We are not doing much to free God when we make him responsible for the errors of the world.

The pantheist does not shrink from dealing with the problem of moral transgression. He is likely to soften down moral faults, however. They are deeds which do not fit into the system of social relationships at a particular time. Society feels warranted in punishing them for the sake of its own welfare. Society did not trouble itself overmuch as to the motives of John Brown, for example. The plans of Brown were disturbing to the social order, and so Brown was put out of the way. This overlooks the fact that some of the sin which is most distressing in the world has nothing to do with the transgression of law. The deep tragedies of struggle over sin take place in the inner recesses of the heart. Moreover, the spectacle of society putting a moral leader out of the way raises more problems than it settles, when we think of society as one of the manifestations of God. If we are but parts and aspects of the Divine Life, there is no way of escaping the charge that God is guilty in our faults.

There is a heroic way of meeting these difficulties and of issuing in an apparently consistent pantheism. Pantheisms have usually been of two kinds, static and dynamic. The old crude pantheism which made everything part of a divine stuff is out of date. To-day the Divine is thought of under terms of energy. The Divine is Energy forever acting at the full. Now it might be conceivable to put this Energy under a law of ascending movement. We might think of God as under a necessary law of development. He might, while unitary in himself, be subject to a war in his members. He might know the conflict between good and evil. With the idea of the good before his eyes he might strive on upward toward that good. This might conceivably be carried through with a show of consistency if God were conceived of as personal from the start. It could not be carried through on the basis of the poetic statement that God sleeps in the inanimate, dreams in the animal, and wakes to full consciousness in man: everything in the universe would have to be the expression of intelligence. In other words, the pantheism would have to be idealistic. The question would turn on the moral nature of the Creative Mind. That Mind would be neither evil nor good, but in process of becoming good.

Such a God would be a poverty-stricken object for devotion. If he moved according to necessity, he would not be entitled to any considerable honor, and if he were free, he could make the finite centers of personal life free.

A substantially pantheistic thought of God has been current for some years which plays rather loosely with the word "Life"—spelled with a capital. Life never dies. It eternally changes, but remains Life. All of which is figure of speech. There is no one Life—there are lives. These lives each have a mark of inalienable distinctiveness—certainly in men, probably in animals, possibly in plants. "Life" is a general term with only a mental reality. The facts are lives. Lives come and lives go, with enough similarity to suggest the general all-inclusive term "Life." We cannot get far in reasoning just by figures of speech. So with the wise remark that under the sea all the islands are one. This is just the play with the sense image, the figure losing its force when we recall that we cannot speak of islands in terms of personal consciousness.

All pantheistic arguments slur over the inalienable self-feeling of the human being who has attained to high self-consciousness. Down at the lower ranges of personal development we might speak of consciousness as merely a

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phase of the divine consciousness, but hardly so with fully developed personality. At the very instant when the person reaches out into the large outside relationships there is the most vigorous reenforcement of the central self-feeling. There is no way of making oneself into another. There might be close parallelism or imitation, but selves are not mutually interpenetrable stuffs. There is no process of spiritual osmosis by which one mind can soak into another. There are centers of activity. Even in so elementary a matter as physical seeing we are dealing with an active agency and not a passive recipient. If pictures are by subtle nervous process in a sense carried into the eye, how can they be seen except as an agent builds up the picture and reads off its meaning? Persons are agents. One person might quicken another to act in a given way. One person might get into another's consciousness by prompting him to a thought or a feeling; but all the merging would mean would be that for the time being the two persons would be thinking or feeling in the same way.

The pantheist responds once more by asking us if the Christian mystics have not experienced a loss of self in communion with God. In an ineffable ecstasy some of the mystics have said

that in the vision of God all distinctions of subject and object have been lost. In dealing with mystics we must distinguish between the more passive experiences like trance and the more active experiences which come out of the elevation of the gaze to an almost unbelievable intensity. In this intensity the mystic always knows who it is that is lost. The feeling is his own feeling, however closely it may approximate to the fullness of divine feeling. In speaking of time we said that there are possible to human consciousness single instants of comprehension when time seems as if it were not. Such appearances approach to the mystic. The mystic keeps his own personal continuity. He knows when he went into the experience and when he came out of it: and he tells us what happened to him during the experience. If anything, mysticism heightens personality.

VIII

SUGGESTIONS OF THE PLURALISTS

OVER against the pantheists stand the pluralists, who go so far as to make man independent of God except as one finite being may be dependent on a bigger finite being, some even denying existence to God altogether. There is reason to believe that some of this pluralism has come out of sheer reaction against the pantheists, or against pantheism as a system. William James, for example, has been counted among the pluralists. James seems to have had an abhorrence of closed philosophic creations. He once said that men as much tinctured with Hegelian absolutism as Josiah Bryce and Borden P. Bowne did not provide for a God of the living. Virtually pleading guilty to teaching the finiteness of God, James said that he was trying to get a real God—the God of Abraham, Jacob, and Isaac. There can be no doubt that insofar as James was a pluralist he was sincerely seeking to add to the worth of man and of God.

It is difficult to tell how seriously James wished to be taken as a philosopher. He had

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a good-natured, kindly suspicion of metaphysicians. We cannot avoid a suspicion that he was at some times poking fun at them and at times scandalizing them by his philosophic suggestions. There is ground, too, to believe that James' inimitable style as a writer of quickening English at times played tricks on him. He had an unerring discernment for the phrase that would pierce and stick, but often it seemed as if he were exhibiting phrases, and trick phrases at that. Nobody can deny the greatness of his influence on the philosophic thought of his day, but he might have shrunk from the title "philosopher" and would certainly have resented "metaphysician." I remember that Borden P. Bowne once told me of receiving a letter from James full of appreciation of Bowne's *Personalism*. James wrote to Bowne to say that he regarded *Personalism* as the most important book of many years. Yet at almost the same time James admitted that his own backlying philosophy was largely that of Spencer and Mill. Two thinkers farther apart than Bowne and Spencer would be hard to find.

Quite likely James' characterization of himself was sound—and typical of many pluralists. They accepted, or accept, on the whole, our evolutionary philosophy without troubling them-

selves overmuch as to just what type of evolutionism it is. The universe moves along till what we call selves are thrown off or break off, into at least relative independence, with the possibility of "willing to believe" in a substantial self, though it is doubtful if James in particular ever made adequate provision for a substantial self. He dealt with streams of consciousness and found unity as over against diversity, and fixity as over against change, by the skillful use of figures of speech. The James philosophy can, of course, be made to prove almost anything we will have it prove. It is one of those brilliant, many-sided, vital systems which have largest effect through the fact that they are not formally systematized. At one instant James looks toward materialism, at another toward virtual idealism, at another toward pantheism. The passage will be recalled in which James speaks of the relation of the finite soul to the mother soul as that of the part of a stream flowing over a dam, to the part of the deep waters above the dam. When the dam is lowered more volume sweeps over into the stream below. In fine, it is difficult to say whether James ought to be called a pluralist in any strict sense of the term. Still he did stand for a finite God, a God limited by other finite beings. Possibly his case is

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like that of most pluralists—the mind feeling reaction and resentment against the pretensions of the absolutists and declaring independence for the human life as against everything else in the universe, all this with no serious attempt to provide philosophic foundations for the system, or non-system, for there can be no system built up out of independent units.

For the sake of at least formal completeness, however, we look at the philosophic difficulties of pluralism. What is the plane on which the units meet, if they get together at all? Human beings surely are not independent of one another. They meet in space and time. What are space and time? It seems a violent absurdity to assume that human beings simply happen together, mutually independent beings meeting by a series of lucky accidents in a world which is not a system at all. God, however, is a misty figure off at a distance and the absurdity of a meeting of God and man without an underlying, supporting system does not at once appear. The absurdity is there nevertheless. If God is finite, he and men must meet in space and time. All the metaphysical difficulties swarm in upon us at once.

Just try to think the system of pluralism through. If we start with a pluralism at all—

of things or forces or selves—how do we get them together? The fact that I can stand off and contemplate two independent entities at once implies that both are parts of a system of which I also am a part. If I can know them at all, we are all parts of one system. The more we can know of one another, the more we can understand one another, the more truly we are of the same system. Suppose we could get into touch with dwellers on Mars. Dwellers on Mars are then of the same solar system with us. Before we could speak to the Martians some system of signs or signals would have to be devised to which both the Martians and ourselves would have to be subject. Try to work all this through on a basis of sheer coincidence—a host of independent units coming into actual or fancied relations to a finite God by coincidence,—finding a measurably understandable universe, and cooperating, or at least trying to cooperate, in that universe. There is no path through these tangles except by assuming that God and men are alike the creatures or products of some Back-lying Being or Force which is mightier than them both. Then somebody rises to say that this Back-lying Force is what he means by God, that he does not intend to worship a finite creation, or output of this Back-lying Force,

no matter how much bigger than man that creation may be. If this objector be told that the Finite God is qualitatively higher and finer than the Back-lying Force, he could reply that an effect cannot be qualitatively greater, or better, than its cause, and he would have all the logic of the situation with him. If the Bigger Finite made certain concessions of his independence to get into touch with the smaller finites, we could ask what distance we would have to travel along this road before we might arrive at the idea of Creator and creations. Then if there were still the Back-lying Veiled Reality the Big Finites and the Little Finites would be arrayed—in Wellsian fashion—against the Veiled Force. Either they would themselves be products of that Veiled Being, in which case they would be no better than it—or they would be independent of it—as to their origin, and then there would be upon us the problem of the system which would make possible their coming together. So on and on.

We are not helped much by the suggestion of preexistence for human souls. Some pluralists seem to think that the problem of the creation of finite souls could be avoided if we could have souls preexisting, presumably without creation. Some theists also have been puzzled by the beginning of souls and have

sought to meet the difficulty by the assumption of preexistence. Inasmuch as I have tried to show the vast reaches of the conceivable as a means of protest against unduly limiting God, it may be well to admit here that the preexistence of souls is conceivable. It is somewhat difficult, however, to see just what preexistence would mean, with memory left out. Nobody has ever remembered a preexistent state. It may be that we sweep into the world trailing clouds of glory from some other state, but the glory is never a content of any positive recollection. In a word, preexistence of finite souls, with the pluralists, is just an *ad hoc* assumption. There is not even the poetic justification for it that there is for the doctrine of metempsychosis or transmigration of souls in Indian philosophy. An Indian, or anyone else, might say that if a man were to choose to be something other than a human being, he should be given a period of existence with an animal form as the appropriate expression and embodiment of his spiritual state. After he had worked through this animal state he might again be given human form. There is a show of poetic justice in all this. If a man insists on living a wolf life in this mundane sphere, he might be given a wolf body and allowed to howl through a wolf existence. This might be

rather hard on the bona fide wolves, but it would have a trace of fitness about it. There is no argument here, but there is as much as in making man preexistent just to save the theory of pluralism. Memory is so integral a part of personal life that we can with difficulty speak of a continued existence across such an interval of lost memory as the theory calls for. Of course this continued existence across lapses of memory is a common enough object of observation in our daily life, but it is another matter to take an abnormal phase of human experience and to stretch that out through successive lifetimes. Just what identity would mean through an eternity of successive existences, with the thread of continuity snapped at the conclusion of every stage, is beyond our power to make out. The identity which we know is that of knowing ourselves to be the same across change, the self-feeling which persists. In some stage of existence there might be an awakening to life of stages passed through—a rushing tide of recollection might bind all together as parts of an indivisible experience—but the theory does not call for any such summing-up. The theory thinks to provide for continued existence only of a formal type. The identity would be the identity only of the name which mind gives its objects.

Moreover, such successive stages of existence imply a dependence on conditions outside the soul itself which robs the soul of all claim to regal independence. What would be the power which would thus run the soul through these changes? The most significant factor in the career of a life from stage to stage would be in the power that ordered the changes. A man might under these circumstances sing beautifully about being the captain of his soul, but captaincy would not mean much in sheer helplessness before such a thoroughgoing law of change.

The pluralist turns on us, however, and says that in strict logic there can be no immortality for a soul unless there is eternal preexistence, and many theists have been sadly puzzled by this contention. Some believers in God have felt that God could not create a soul outright and fit it into the system of things without doing violence to logic, or to the conservation of energy or to something equally formidable. If the soul begins, it may end also. Very likely, but who has said that a soul cannot end? I do not believe that souls do come to an end, but their endlessness roots in the will of God. If the will of God calls for the beginning of a soul, the will of God might conceivably call for the cessation of a soul. There is no more difficulty here than with the introduction of

any finite factor. As to the conservation of energy there is no reason for making a boggy of conservation. Allowing the utmost scope to freedom, freedom would not necessarily mean anything more than the power to use the forces already in existence. The finite soul would have forces enough from which to choose for its self-realization.

Some pluralists will have it that the soul has outright creative power. The truth in this claim we can best consider in the next chapter. We remark here that if this is true, we have on our hands the phenomenon of much half-conscious or almost non-conscious creation. If we were dealing with an intelligent God who might be thought of as granting successive measures of power to finite intelligences, the problem could not be a heavy strain on our thought, but what is unconscious creation? How can that which comes out of unconsciousness fit itself into a system of things every atom of which at least seems to be ruled by law? The Big Finite would have to fit together the efforts of the little finites into some consistent whole. Does the Big Finite have its unconscious, or subconscious depths? If so, the old question comes again—What is the Back-lying Power which coordinates and correlates all into unity?

The thought of finite selves as outright creators does not receive much help from the consciousness of the so-called creators. We are most nearly creators in our thought-life. The creation of a character in fiction, or of a system of thought, or of an artistic conception is most truly real creation, but even here the best things seem to come from outside of ourselves. The novelist or dramatist reaches a stage where the characters move of themselves. The thinker feels that his system goes by a logic of its own. There is seldom a feeling in the highest creative work that the work comes out of the finite intelligence itself. It reaches out to something beyond the self. The creator rejoices to feel that this universal accent sounds in his work.

As for creation in the material sphere this can hardly go beyond discovery and invention. Discovery, of course, is the finding of something already in existence, and invention is putting already existing forces to a new use. There is enough in such possibilities to provide scope for our creative activity without limiting the Creator in the pluralist's fashion.

IX

WHAT FREEDOM INVOLVES

ALL that the pluralist is legitimately entitled to he can get with the freedom granted to finite beings. That is enough. To be sure, there is a deep gulf between the freedom granted to men and any freedom which could be called absolute. A man has no choice as to the time and space-relations into which he is born. He has nothing to say about where he is to be born or when he is to be born. He has nothing to say about the race to which he is to belong, or about the lines of heredity which are to work through him. His own endowment also is beyond him, except to the degree to which he may improve upon it by his own effort. For a long infancy his freedom will be negligible so far as any considerable objective effect is concerned; and a thousand forces may impair his freedom before old age weakens his will and death cuts him off. In spite of all this and a hundred other things that could be said, human freedom is a portentous force. Even those who strenuously deny freedom as strenuously call upon the rest of us likewise to

deny it, thereby assuming the force they are denying.

The freedom is not the freedom of such outright creative power as some of the pluralists have clamored for. It is the freedom to choose among and use the forces of the world. I cannot make outright a chemical power, but I can use those already made. The scientist tells me that all I can do is to change the relations—mostly spatial relations—of the materials I find at hand. That being true, I do well to heed the definition of production given by some political economists to the effect that economic production consists largely in changing the relations of things—as in the construction of a machine or in transporting material from place to place. Men cannot indeed create, in the outright sense, but they can produce, and production is but slightly inferior to outright creation.

For illustration think of the changes which men have made in the physical world through their power as users of material. Since the destructive aspects of an achievement are more impressive to our sensation-loving minds, think of what man has cut away, or killed off, or blown up from the face of the earth. In a century—or a little more—the American people did what is called subjugating a continent,

which involved slashing down forests by wholesale, almost hopelessly polluting great rivers, wiping out whole species of wild life like buffaloes and passenger pigeons, driving a race of savages into practical subjection. By the way, a scientist has recently said that in civilized regions the destruction of beautiful wild life is going forward at such a pace that in a comparatively short time the dwellers in the more civilized communities will never have a chance to see anything wild except English sparrows and rats or mice.

All this destruction has been accomplished, understand, without getting out of touch with that precious principle, the conservation of energy. Granted that the sum totals of energy remain constant, their forms have been mightily changed. If I set fire to a forest and start ten thousand acres to burning I may not be either a creator or a destroyer in any absolute sense, for the sum total of energy may remain constant, but I change the uses to which the energy can be put, and some of the changes have the effect of outright destruction. If a power is changed into such a form that it is thereafter forever beyond my reach, it is practically destroyed. It does not make the significance of what I have done any the less to say that I have not taken an ounce from the

force in the universe, that the total of energy remains the same. This is a mere quibble in face of the portentousness of the significance in my hands of the possibility of using power.

The constructive aspect is more important. Without withdrawing a syllable of condemnation on wanton destruction let us remember that the domestication of wild animals is one of the outstanding achievements of mankind. If we are tempted to grieve over the loss of the buffaloes, let us remember what took their place—the cattle on which the feeding of a world so largely depends. There are more cattle than there ever were buffaloes, though it was little short of a crime to wipe out so completely this noble form of wild-life. As to the pigeon, the hen is more important than the pigeon. We might go on to the cataloguing of material achievements, but there is no need. Let us remind ourselves that a power which can make virtually new species of plants and animals is no mean power, and that those who preach birth-control to us say that what they seek is the production of substantially new and better types of human life.

The factor introduced by human freedom, then, is one of whose possibilities we can form no adequate idea. Because of these very possibilities a certain type of defender of the

omnipotence of God insists that freedom must be an illusion. It cannot be that such power is in the hands of men. There is no way of meeting persistent objection of this sort except by insisting upon the conclusions to which the facts seem to lead us. For all that we can absolutely prove to the contrary, there may be no such thing as freedom. We may all be poor puppets jerked by unseen wires. All may be illusion, our sense of freedom included. When all is illusion, however, the theories of determinism may be illusion. If men get to talking about illusions, they pick and choose among the illusions. If all is illusion, the belief in illusion may be illusion. No: the illusionist does not care to believe that all is illusion. He feels that he has the truth. Most defense of determinism is determination to have it so. The determinist of the theological stripe does not want any of God's plans upset, and the determinist of the scientific or philosophic stripe thinks the introduction of freedom would lead to inevitable chaos. Strictly speaking, however, the chaos is with the determinists. There is no use of picking and choosing of any sort on the deterministic basis. It has been said of Spinoza that he was the one consistent determinist in that as soon as he had announced his theory he declared that with the acceptance

of the deterministic dogma there was nothing more to be said. Argument is out of place in a deterministic system, for all utterances stand alike on the same plane as to causality, and all talk of choosing between them is folly, whatever folly means on such basis. If the determinist says that the belief in determinism is caused in him by the World-Cause, the upholder of freedom can say that his objection to determinism comes from the same Cause. It is indeed a curious situation. Many a determinist freely chooses determinism and many a free-willist believes in freedom because of a sense of freedom irresistibly gushing up within himself.

It is at this point of human freedom that we feel that limitation should be made on the doctrine of the divine omnipotence. Most surely we shall have to give up the dictionary idea of omnipotence. We can see that God can do all things except those which his own rational and moral character make impossible, and those which are turned over to the sphere of the freedom of a free man's choice, the human freedom itself being the grant of the Creator, and moving within a range of activities where the will of God must necessarily be a cooperating factor. It is not as if God could be thought of as creating a will and then allowing that will to go its own course. The

soul itself is a continuously acting agent drawing the resources of its strength from the Divine. Without aiming at knowledge too high for us we may fairly say that in a sense a human life is two interacting processes—the human and the divine—the processes sometimes almost parallel and again somewhat opposed but inextricably bound up together, the choices of the human making necessary now one type and now another of divine activity. In the meaning that human choices condition the divine activity there is necessarily limitation of the Divine Will. We may, if we choose, fall back upon the conservation of energy again and say that all the physical powers are in God's hands, that power of choice on the part of man means that God so respects man's choice that God himself directs the physical forces one way or another according to the choice of man. This is what the cynic probably meant when he referred so bitterly to God as the Great Accomplice. God has such respect for human choice that when a man makes a bad choice God carries out the bad choice to its appropriate course in the play and interplay even of havoc-working forces. This is admittedly fine spun, but it is permissible to spin finely—and thinly—provided we know and say what we are doing.

The question is now and again raised as to whether in the end things will not come out the same under freedom as under determinism. With all the possibilities before God there ought to be some confidence that the end will be what God intended it, no matter what men do. This may be true as far as physical outcomes are concerned. It cannot be true so far as the spiritual states of men are concerned, for such reasoning would imply that evil choices make no differences in man. With the material forces the problem is different. God might conceivably make the evil choices of men to cancel one another, or he might overrule the objective results of evil choices, so that the framework and physical foundation of even a perfect social order might be laid in spite of the evil choices of men. This too is a good deal in the air. So far as we can see, the evil choices of men count and count dreadfully in the physical universe. How can God replace a species of animals or plants that has been wiped out through man's destructiveness? To say that many of these ought to have been destroyed does not quite meet the point as to the possibility of man's destructiveness. More of a case can be made out for God's bringing about a beneficent outcome in spite of man's omissions than in spite of his actual destructiveness.

What, for example, shall we say of the races of men that have actually been annihilated by contact with the white man? Backward though these races no doubt were, can we think of it as the plan of the Divine that they should have perished before coming to any racial self-expression? Here, again, it does not quite meet the point to reply that there have been many changes among peoples for which man's choice was in no way responsible. No doubt, as we shall see, God is abundantly responsible for changes in human affairs, but that does not change human responsibility, so far as it is responsibility.

Does human freedom limit the divine omniscience? This is an age-old debate about as far from settlement now as when it was raised first. The foreknowledge of a free act has never been proved a contradiction, and it has never been shown that the inability of Divine Wisdom to foresee a free choice would seriously upset divine procedure. As knowing all the possibilities in the whole situation, God would seem to be in possession of all the knowledge worth while. Some draw back from any theory which would leave any loophole for surprises for God, but just what surprise coming out of a human choice would mean to a God knowing every possible choice is beyond telling.

The problem here is not lightly to be pushed to one side. It profoundly disturbs multitudes of earnest believers, anxious to provide for the dignity of man on the one hand and for the sovereignty of God on the other. We are here largely in a realm where our personal preferences will decide our choices. If any sacrifice has to be made, I personally should prefer the sacrifice of the divine omniscience rather than human freedom. It is not irreverence to say that the God in whom we believe knew what he was doing when he made men free—that if there has been any curtailing of divine knowledge, it was done in the very bestowal of freedom on man, which we believe to have been a free act of God's own will. Still, the limitation of the divine knowledge seems beyond all conceivability to some theists. An old teacher of mine, Professor Lorenzo Dow McCabe, of Ohio Wesleyan, contended through a lifetime for the divine nescience of future choices of men. He was most severely criticized even for the statement of the thesis. I do not remember that I ever heard any serious attempts to meet his arguments, except that the proposition was derogatory to the divine character.

The believers in the ideality of time have, it seems to me, dismissed the problem too summarily. Borden P. Bowne used to say that

with the ideality of time once established the whole question of foreknowledge falls to the ground. Yet Bowne himself did not hold to the ideality of time in quite the conventional sense. He provided for real change in the world, and for time as the mental form under which these changes are grasped by intelligence. Choices are changes, and not of the same kind as the changes of an inanimate system in which all can be foreseen. Even here, as we saw in a previous chapter, "before-and-after" must make some difference to God. We do not pretend to say just what difference would be made to the Divine Mind by the free choices of men—but whatever lack of foreknowledge would be—translated into terms of the divine psychology, that we think there must be. Still, we repeat, that is largely personal preference.

X

THE BONDS OF CREATORSHIP

AT this point our argument turns a corner. I have been talking about metaphysics. Henceforth our questions will lie in the realm of more practical experience. Instead of dealing with metaphysical limitations alleged against God we must henceforth deal with limitations upon God from the fact of his personal and social dealings with created men. We are not seeking to build up an idea of God. We are taking God, so to speak, just as we find him in the New Testament and in the utterances of Christian Consciousness. We take God as of holy love, the Father of men.

May we say then, at the outset, that there could hardly be a heavier responsibility conceivable than that of the creation of a race of free men. I have dealt with this so elaborately in other places that I ask indulgence for a few sentences of repetition. In our day we have come to see that power and responsibility must go together. We cannot hold a man responsible for the use of power which he does not have, but we can insist that he take bonds

upon himself with every ounce of power that comes into his control. As soon as we see that money is almost literally power we begin to preach that the possession of money is safe only with those who use it wisely and morally.

God cannot be omnipotent in any sense that makes it permissible for him to use power immorally. If there were no persons in the universe except God, then it might be legitimate for God to do as he pleases with his forces. Just how moral God could be, living in solitary grandeur, if it were possible for him to bring souls like himself into existence, we do not undertake to say. The moment, however, another person appears God takes on new obligations with the arrival of that person. He becomes a member of a moral society. Up to the moment when the soul appears God's moral life may have shown itself in his self-expressions. Now it must show itself also in the expressions to the other person.

We urge—at the risk of appearing commonplace—the tremendous bonds upon God because of his creatorship. Creatorship does not make it possible to consult beforehand souls as to whether they will come to this world. If we had been preexistent, we might have been consulted. We have no recollections of such consultation. We are all drafted into

earthly existence. If this does not put obligations upon the Creator, then there is no telling what obligations may mean anywhere. God is responsible to the men he has brought into existence, responsible to himself, responsible to any spiritual spectators there may be anywhere in the universe.

Let us hasten to say that we cannot from this obligation deduce what God must do, or is to do, in a given concrete life. All we can say is that there are some general obligations upon God, because of his creatorship, which must be recognized. It is not possible for us to tell in detail, or in the concrete, what those obligations call for in this or that situation. Even in our own moral activities there are two elements: there is an absolute obligation to good will, there is a concrete course of action under that good will which is relative to a score of factors in the situation itself. We resent criticism upon our treatment of our fellows when the critic speaks just from the standpoint of the absolute moral obligation without any knowledge of the relative factors. It does not help me much to be told of the law of good will, when good will may call for my treating a man in one of two opposed ways and I am doing my utmost to find which is the better way. We cannot deduce concrete codes

of action from the absolute good will alone. I have a right to be taken on trust as to the good will of my intent and to be allowed suspension of judgment until the outworking of the concrete factors in the final outcome.

God indeed has a similar right. Believing as we do in his holy love, we have no way of judging his deed in a given situation. The sooner we learn the limitations of our own facilities for passing judgment on any of God's concrete acts, the better. For the most part in a given situation the appearances are against God. Our knowledge of the concrete world is mostly a knowledge of the steps by which events come to pass. As soon as we have arranged events in any orderly sequence we may say that we understand. We do not understand *why* anything is as it is, or occurs as it does, except in the narrowly scientific sense. It would not do for us to practice the literal imitation of God as he works in nature. When we say, "Be perfect as the Father in heaven is perfect," we refer to imitable spiritual attributes. When we ask why this or that particular thing is, or why this or that particular event occurred, the profoundest human wisdom is dumb. We can all raise questions about what we have seen pass under our own eyes which no human wisdom can

answer. This all adds to the responsibility of God at the end.

It is a vast tribute to the faith of humanity in the essential goodness at the heart of the universe that the mystery of God's dealing with men makes as little trouble as it does in human hearts. Most men take things about as they find them without sickling themselves over with a pale cast of thought. They meet shock after shock and yet go on undismayed. That the race can believe in the goodness at the heart of things is one of the most astonishing phenomena in history. It may be that this is just constitutional cheerfulness with no moral or spiritual value, but that does not lessen the responsibility on the Creator. If there is no good outcome at the end, the responsibility is increased by having added constitutional human hopefulness to a hopeless situation.

In the face of these strictures on the actual universe some man may ask us to make any suggestions as to how it could be improved. This is the type of question by which an almost bullying type of intellect so often seeks to carry a point. We admit that we have no valuable suggestions to make. We acknowledge that no one has yet succeeded in fashioning a consistent Utopia for human society. We have

not yet been able to devise a framework for human society on which the social structure can stand in sure stability. When we think of a heaven beyond this life none of us can paint in detail with much success. Outside of communion with God and fellowship with our friends and opportunity for worthy service few have made any suggestions as to heaven worth listening to. All this we willingly admit—and yet we ask how this helps us or lightens the responsibility upon God. We are not only set adrift in the world through no choice of our own—but the request to make suggestions as to the improvement of the world is almost an affront in our poor state. This request, however, does meet the response that we would like to know why such hardships come upon us. If we could know why, we could bear them better.

Another protestant against this putting of the responsibility of God tells us that we are taking an advantage of an abstraction—the abstract right of a man to be consulted before being sent on hazardous adventures. Suppose the adventure itself turns out to be glorious. Does not the abstract right to be consulted pale into insignificance before the sheer joy of living? The abstract right then seems about as barren as would a right to be consulted

before receiving an earthly fortune. Life itself is sweet, and its sweetness makes vain all complaint about God's responsibility for sending us into the world without consulting us.

We would not draw a picture darker than it is, but we would see the facts as they are. It is true that life is sweet when it has any chance to be life. Mere existence, however, is not necessarily sweet. Of course it is possible to say, as some have said, that if life were not sweet, the majority of men would commit suicide. This is a bit extreme. Men may hold on to life because of a blind instinct of self-preservation, or because they fear that death may lead to something worse. It goes without saying that the majority of human beings who have thus far lived on the face of the earth have had no proper life. How inspiring it is to hear some philosopher, seated in a comfortable library, declaring that life itself whether long or short is its own satisfaction! How noble to hear that the pursuit of any supernatural or superhuman sanctions to add to the value of life is perverted and selfish! The majority of men are not philosophers and do not sit in library chairs. The majority of men labor and are heavy laden. They cling to the fringes of existence, mocked by disease and death.

Let us come back into the sunshine. What we desire above all to say is that, make the actual plight of mankind as desperate as we may, there is no ground for despair if God has the power and if God acts under a sense of moral responsibility. A Negro driven to desperation by the stigma on his race once cried out bitterly: "God is responsible! God is responsible!" The Negro spoke truly, but a meaning more hopeful than he had in mind can be put into his words. God is responsible. One type of pessimism would have us believe that things are now in such a mess that they are beyond God's power. To read some accounts of the social collapse in Europe since the war we might think that we had indeed passed into a twilight of civilization beyond any hope of a new dawn whatsoever. To meet this a full-orbed conception of a responsible God is necessary.

Why do we not say that God is love and leave it there? Because the doctrine of the love of God as taught in the past twenty-five years lends itself too readily to amiable weakness. Men emptied all the stiff morality out of the Divine Nature. The love of God was made a gushing affection with somewhat of a trend toward silliness. We have no reference to the doctrine that God would treat all men

with gentleness, regardless of their deserts. We have reference to the fact that a smug and comfortable Christianity overlooked the desperate condition of the world and forgot to join the idea of power to the idea of holy love. We are thinking now of a holiness binding on God himself. A timidity which fears to place responsibility on a holy God is worthless in a world like ours.

The one general consideration which underlies all others which may seem like limitations on God in his dealing with free men is that of the respect due the freedom of men. The problem is that of training men into free companionship with God. Just think how intricate and complex that problem is! Our observation shows us that human life begins on a predominantly animal basis. If it is true that the human embryo recapitulates in a few months the æons of animal development, we can see how deeply rooted in the animal is that spiritual which it is the aim of the Divine dealing to bring to the fore. We are not dealing with a being which is all animal or all spiritual, or one which is passing out of pure animal into pure spirit. We are dealing with a being which begins on the animal plane and does not rise out of the animal but brings the animal and physical more and more under the sway

of the moral and spiritual. We are confronted with the spectacle of what Amiel calls a candidate for humanity's electing and realizing his own humanity. Habit might be called a sort of accumulated righteousness or evil as the will makes good or evil choices. If we are to think of God as under obligation of respect to the freedom of men, we can see something of the unspeakable complexity of the task before God—that middle road which must be stern even for God to travel. The old doctrine of settling all human problems by divine decree of an absolute Sovereign will not work. Such a Sovereign might decree into existence a race of manikins, but that would be all. The free response of men, again, cannot be won by any sort of ordering men about. Men cannot be saved by law to-day any more truly than in Paul's day. We, of course, mean law in the sense of decree of a sovereign. It would be easy, on the other hand, to conceive of God as leaving men free to go their own way. Some expounders of freedom have made freedom just a wild lunging about. To keep the divine power on the soul and yet to leave the soul free just to the right degree for the attainment of moral self-hood is a tax even on divine resources, a tax that calls not for such mighty puttings forth of energy as would move moun-

tains, but self-control and skill and patience beyond all human understanding.

Taking God as we find him in the New Testament, it would be beyond thinking that he would undertake such a task without the consciousness of resources within himself which would assure success, resources too of the moral sphere like persuasiveness, especially. If we are to say that God is free from moral fault, he must put forth all his resources, so that there is no chance of saying that any finite soul coming to failure, has failed through anything except his own human choice. Theologically minded revivalists who make all the chances tell against sinners if the sinners do not accept the revivalists' prescriptions, whatever they may be, do not seem to see the predicament in which they leave God. God has to do everything he possibly can to save men if they fall into sin. God is not, indeed, responsible for the evil choice itself, but he made the will that made the choice. Once started on this line there is not any stopping-place short of the cross on Calvary. If any man fails at the end, it must be only after all the powers of divine grace have been exhausted in his behalf. The case against the man must be final, admitting of no doubt whatsoever.

XI

IS FORGIVENESS LIMITED?

IN asking whether there are limits upon divine grace we seem almost to be uttering sacrilege. The Christian thought is of a Father helping his children to learn to walk in the moral and spiritual life. It would seem that there ought certainly to be no artificial hindrances to a work like this. The blunders of the children would be at least in large part like the stumbling of children learning to use their feet and legs for progress. It is the duty of an earthly father to be patient with his children. Severe punishment for blunder would appear to be inconceivable. Yet we no sooner get over into this realm of the training of the moral will in righteousness than we are told of the enormity of sin and of the provisions which have to be met before the Divine Father can forgive and restore.

There is confusion here of many varieties. To begin with, there is the confusion which has never yet been shaken out of the consciousness of the church, between an evil tendency in human nature and guilt. We

have already said that the problem before the Divine Father is inconceivably taxing—this of taking a creature on a plane predominantly animal and of leading him to control that animal and physical tendency for a moral purpose. The animal tendency may be made worse by specific inherited peculiarities that come with the particular soul—though this sphere of heredity is appallingly dark to us. The task here is God's task. He is the author of the laws of heredity, as he is of the laws which express the animal aspect of human life. If I am not responsible for coming into this universe at all, I am certainly not responsible for what I bring with me. After I have had a chance to attack the animal in me and have deliberately refused to do so, then fault begins, but up to that point the problem is for the Divine and the responsibility is his. Far be it from me to belittle the consequences of sin, but first let us know what sin is. It is not the burden of the animal or of heredity which I bring into the world with me. There are indeed evil inheritances in this world. The lurking tendency toward the old doctrine of original or birth guilt is one of them.

In the next place, sin can hardly be sin, strictly speaking, until it is committed in measurably clear light. No one, indeed, has

full light on the consequences of sin. Of even his executioners Jesus said, "They know not what they do." There must be a fair measure of light before we can talk of severe dealing. With the child, surrounded as he is by a world of impulses which express the earthly aspects of his life, there may not be more than just the knowledge that commands ought not to be disobeyed. All talk of dire consequences of sin in such a situation is beside the mark, badly off the mark. The inspired insight of the pictorial account in Genesis of the entry of sin into the world is true to human psychology. All the interpreters of the Fall who make out that Adam was dowered with high intelligence and lost it, would better read their Bibles more carefully. In the story the mind of Adam was of a childlike quality. He disobeyed a commandment in a thoroughly childish fashion. The penalty passed on him was not that of eternal death, which the rigor-and-vigor school of theologians would have us believe the least sin deserves. He was transferred to an environment more suitable to a mind and will which stood in need of development.

Many of the views of the divine forgiveness which virtually place limits upon God's grace come out of saying that God is indeed Father—

but he is also something else. God is our Father, but he is also King. These "God-is-Father-and-also-something-else" theories would make of no effect the teaching of Jesus. Of course God is something else. He is Creator and Preserver and Ruler. The fundamental truth about his relation to us is, however, that he is Father. All else has to be made secondary. These "and-also" theories put other aspects of his relation to us on a same plane with Fatherhood, and in doing so they become deadly heresies. It must always be kept in mind that a deadly heresy is not one which states an outright falsity but one which falsely emphasizes a truth.

God is Father and also King. "King" is not an especially appropriate title for God in any event, but we let that pass. In the least disobedience of law the King has suffered loss in dignity and something must be done about it. What a fall it is from the word "Father," as Jesus used the word, to the word "King," as that word was used almost in a feudal sense. We must be careful not to be harsh in our judgment of the theologians who used—and misused—a feudal terminology. In a feudal age there were not any others which would have been so intelligible. Why, however, keep on using such terms? Is God's dignity as King

so portentous, as over against children whom the King has called into the world, as to make elaborate provisions for apology necessary in case of the fault of the children? The children must be taught to respect the Father, but true respect can in the end go out only to that which is inherently respectable. A God always standing on his own dignity in relation to his own children is not a highly respectable figure. It will not do for us to make essential to God's moral attitude to his children postures or poses which we would not think respectable in an earthly father.

A later age felt called upon to say that God is not only Father but also Moral Governor of the universe. It is odd that we get no hint in the teaching of Jesus about the qualifications that must be brought into Fatherhood by the Moral Governorship of the universe. Again, we must not be too critical. An age which laid all stress on legal terms was honoring God with the best terms it knew. The emphasis, however, got horribly misplaced—shifted around to the law itself, as if it were more important than the Fatherhood itself. A favorite illustration in those days was that of the king whose son had committed an offense punishable with the loss of both eyes. The law had to be upheld, and the king submitted

to the loss of one of his own eyes rather than have his son lose both eyes. This is a bracing sort of illustration teaching the love and the justice of God. Its artificial character, however, is only too apparent—for either the king thought of the law as something sacred in itself, or he thought of his own sacrifice as just an expedient to win the obedience of his subjects. There is a rough nobility about it all, but what a distance from the parable of the prodigal son!

Paul got near the center of the truth as to the whole problem of law, though he had in mind the old Mosaic system rather than the more artificial decrees of a moral government theory of atonement. Through the centuries law among the Jews got away from the human and humane spirit of Moses and the prophets and became an end in itself. We are not to suppose that all the Pharisees of Paul's day were as conscientious as Paul was, but any subject of the law who took seriously the interpretation that in offending against the law in any one particular we sin against the whole law would have had as serious a struggle as did Paul. Just think of the argument that if we break the law in one particular, we break the whole law! The notion, however, lingers along in some quarters to this day. A sinner is a sinner! A lawbreaker is a lawbreaker!

That sort of judicial reasoning, made a rule of procedure for God, upholds the morality of God at the expense of his intelligence, and does not leave him so wholly moral after all. There could not be anything in judicial procedure more immoral than to treat all offenders alike. This would be to carry a clumsily made class-term to a significance beyond all reason.

Paul found the way out, and found a way which can be traveled by any who are tormented by an abstract system of moral laws which become veritable bodies of death. That is the trouble with systems of laws taken as ends-in-themselves. Let a man erect a moral law into a thing-in-itself and he is chained to a body of death, unless he has one of the easy-going consciences which can make all manner of adjustments not provided for by the law. The serious conscience keeps asking if it has done enough. The morally-minded man comes to the end of the day asking if this or that could not have been improved. "Was I genuinely sincere in all that I did and said?" This is a maddening question. The fact that most persons say that this or that was "near enough" or "would do" does not change the seriousness of the distress for the sensitive type of conscience. We start out in the morning thinking that perhaps to-day we shall reach

the ideal. Night comes and finds the ideal farther ahead than in the morning. Paul found the way out: he saw finally that God is not a taskmaster but a Father, and he cried, "Abba-Father." Then all changed. The moral laws were not things-in-themselves, or edicts of a taskmaster. They were guides to moral life. Their spirit was more important than the letter. The Father above would look not merely to the outward performance but to the heart and would take the intention for the deed. The voice of conscience, taken by itself, can drive to madness. Taken as the prompting of the Spirit of God it can make for inner peace.

I do not mean to disparage those who tell us to live the moral life for that life itself. There is a fine quality in a good deed, as fine as the quality of the beauty in a noble work of art. I cannot see, however, how either the good deed or the beautiful artistry lose anything by being made essential not merely to the best and finest in us, but essential to the Spirit of the Universe.

We come to another "Father-and-also" doctrine. God is not only the Father of man but is the source and energy of the world. He has woven constitutional morality into the universe itself. An evil deed is taken up into

the system of activities and carried on and on. William James has a striking passage as to how the molecules of a man's nervous system become the executioners for the punishment of evil habit. The molecules register against the evildoer. So the believer in biological righteousness asks how forgiveness can ever be more than limited. Under the spell of the modern conception of scientific law many of us talk this way. We remind ourselves that no force is ever lost. We fall back on our illustration about the stone dropped in the pool of water. We ask how a sinner will ever regain the time lost in evildoing. We ask, as did Nicodemus, How can a man be born when he is old? The conversion of a wrongdoer seems to go against all the laws of habit.

We do not minimize the cogency of this reasoning. It is vastly more important than the artificial conceptions of law which we have been considering. Still, we must not lose our bearings. If it is possible for good personal forces to become atrophied by disuse, it is possible for evil habits also to be atrophied when the will's choices set in another direction. It would be a strange universe which would not be fitted to aid in the creation of a good habit. Much of our trouble comes from thinking of man's place in the universe as due

to a kind of after-thought, as if man were fitted in and accommodated to the system as best might be. As to lost time, that point can easily be overworked. Souls are always being born. Have the later comers always to look forward to being behind-time as compared with the earlier comers?

The strict moralist tells us that we must be careful not to speak as if sin made no difference. Sin does make a difference—an awful difference: but we are trying not to limit the grace of God. Forgiveness is, first of all, a personal matter between two persons—God and man. Forgiveness, however, must mean that healing forces are set to work to repair the damage done by sin—and we have never made enough of the curative powers of the universe, though the memory of transgression will always remain. Ask any genuinely repentant wrongdoer if he can take the recollection of evildoing lightly?

Those who insist upon something “objective” in the work of Divine Grace which must be met before sinners can be forgiven are moved by a sound instinct, no matter how inadequately their statement may meet the full moral claims. By “objective” they mean a force directed to something beside the sinner’s will. The “objective” cannot be conceived of as an impersonal system of moral laws.

It must then be in the divine nature itself. Suppose we say that the work of redemption must satisfy God's own self-respect. He has brought children into the world. His plans for their rescue must include a satisfaction of the deepest in his own nature. That must mean a willingness to go to the utmost for their salvation, so far as that "utmost" lies within moral terms. Of course God cannot save men immorally. If forgiveness is limited when it is confined to moral terms, then limitation is strangely conceived, for such limitation would serve to set on high the unlimited goodness of God. No soundly penitent seeker would ask to be forgiven on any but moral terms. One mark of such soundness would necessarily be a willingness to meet any conditions for the uprooting by changed life of all tendencies to sin. In the end every phase of forgiveness will be seen to be a manifestation of the unlimited moral goodness of God.

XII

ANSWERABLE PRAYER

THE question of answer to prayer has been debated in Christian circles since the times of Jesus. Can God answer prayer? Does he? In no field does the idea of a limited God count with more practical effect than here.

In the next chapter I shall try to deal with alleged limitations on the power of God to get into touch with men's minds, which really have to do with a phase of the prayer life. In dealing with answer to prayer, however, we more often think of the realm of outer events, what we are pleased to call the "objective." Has the prayer of man power to bring the will of God into play objectively, and not merely as an influence on men's minds? The distinction is somewhat artificial, but we observe it for its significance in popular thinking.

The possibility of answer of this objective sort is more readily conceded now than in the days of deism, when men more often thought of the world as a machine, going by itself, and of answer to prayer as a breaking into the ordinary working of that machine. In much

heathen prayer there is a mass of ritual to attract the attention of a far-away god. Elijah's taunt to the priests of Baal that perhaps their god was asleep or had gone on a journey would still be in place in some heathen lands, and would have been in place under deistic thought. It was necessary first to attract the attention of the god, or God. Our modern teachings about divine immanence have been a help to the imagination at least in that they have brought God nearer. Moreover, the idea that a God is so embarrassed by his own laws that he cannot work through these to answer any prayer worth answering is fast passing. Laws do not have to be set aside to answer prayer. All that is necessary is to use the laws. If the creation and training of man is as important as Christian thought assumes, man must have been from the beginning so fashioned as to be reachable by the instrument of God's universe. We remark in passing that the thought of laws, or of natural processes, as usable in the hands of God has always seemed to come easily and naturally to men. Take the answers to prayer in the Old Testament. Some of them move in the air of marvel and wonder, though it is questionable if the Scripture writer always meant by his signs and wonders just what we mean by miracle. There

were prayers for good harvests, for the birth of sons, for victory in battle, without any suggestion than these blessings would come in any other than the natural way. To say that God's laws hinder answer to prayer is, as sometimes put, about as reasonable as to say that the existence of language makes speech impossible. There are limitations in the use of speech as in the use of law, but language was made for use. Law was made for use.

The more pertinent question is as to whether God will answer prayer. Here there are on the face of the problem some limitations. It is well to look at these limitations to see if they are limitations after all.

To begin with, if I ask God for a material answer to a prayer I must keep in mind that God is like unto Christ. All that we are saying is on the assumption that God is the God of the New Testament. If God is a Father with a spirit like unto the Christ-spirit, God must be true to me, and to the best in me, even the Christ in me. All thought of coddling me, of humoring me, or of giving me what I ask for just because I ask for it, is out of the question. Bowne once said that he believed in the Fatherhood of God, not the grand-fatherhood of God, by which he meant to rebuke the idea that God must give us what we want just because

we want it. How long would the world be worth living in if we looked at prayer in a puerile fashion?

God must be true to me in dealing with me. We have said that God is under bonds to respect the wills of men. If that means anything, it means more than merely respect for men's choices. It means a resolution to make the most of those wills. So that we forthwith run into a region of paradox, but of Christian paradox. The best way to answer some petitions is not to answer them, or, rather, to put the petitioner on the path of answering them for himself. If we may say so without irreverence, God can be thought of as in a measure like a good executive who will never do anything himself that he can get another to do, especially if that other is one whom he is trying to train to partnership with himself.

God cannot be expected to deal with a petitioner in any such fashion as to leave the petitioner less of a man after the petition has been granted than before. God cannot pauperize his children. Which is the greater limitation? To be held back by the consideration of the welfare of men from granting the request of men, or to be carried on to the granting of the requests which create in the end a brood of will-paupers?

A temptation likely to beset every Christian in dealing with wills at all under his charge is toward paternalism. The more ardently a father loves his children, the more desperate the temptation to do too much for them. The more thoroughly a pastor is devoted to his flock, the more he feels the inclination to do for them much that they should be asked and expected to do for themselves. The more the church gets impressed with the sufferings of the socially oppressed, the intenser the desire to do too much. The more the church in a Christian land becomes filled with care for converts from heathenism, the more the temptation grows to keep the converts religiously dependent. This is the temptation to which the Christian is liable. It is the temptation, however, which simply must not be allowed to hinder a divine work.

Answer to prayer, then, for material blessing can best be conceived under the form of reenforcement of the human will, so that the will can better itself achieve its own object. It is the granting of opportunity to the petitioner to do for himself what he would likely ask God to do for him. It is possible to think of this as a sacrifice for God himself in that the final result is less effective or beautiful than if some direct answer had been granted to the peti-

tioner. The world itself is pretty badly scarred through the blundering free will of men, but that is of little matter if in the end men are built up into real freedom. The best answer to prayer is the full life of the petitioner. Prayer has to be judged by what happens to the man who prays. That is why most of us who have attained to any considerable experience in the Christian life so devoutly thank God for some things we have asked for and have not received. Ask any experienced Christian if he thinks it is a limitation upon God that God will not give him everything he asks for.

Secondly, the God of the answered prayer must be true not merely to the petitioners but to all others who compose the family of God. All prayer is to be conceived of in social terms. This is self-evident when it is thought of as applying to the members of the family of God. Any true Christian will at once cease to ask anything for himself when he discovers that others of the family of God will suffer through his petition's being granted. The social outlook of prayer, however, is not to be narrowed down to the confessed family of God. The very fact that men are men gives them such sacredness that whether they are in the family of God or not they have rights as men which

all children of God must respect. There is nothing in the service of God which entitles a man to seek for anything merely in the way of a personal privilege. There may be, indeed, blessings which touch me alone, but these are best conceived of as given to me to be used under a sense of trusteeship. The man outside the kingdom of heaven has rights which the man inside that kingdom must respect. God sendeth his rain on the just and on the unjust, and maketh his sun to shine on the evil and on the good. There at least seem to be, according to the New Testament, rights belonging to men as men which it is Christian duty to respect. No member of the kingdom of God could ask that the rainfall be shut off from the man outside the Kingdom for the sake of the man inside the Kingdom. I was once urging upon a good Methodist in a position of church leadership the recognition of the claims of a group of laboring men altogether outside the church. "Why should we Methodists grant the petition of these men? They do not in any sense belong to the constituency of the church." These were, indeed, the words of a poor, weak brother—weak in spite of his prominence in the church—but the spirit here is common enough, the spirit not broad enough to see that the social impulse which should be

back of prayer should look far toward the outsiders. It might be well for any man going to his knees before God to ask for material blessing, to ask himself first if he would be willing to have his prayer published to all the world, or published at least before the groups of the socially-minded. If this seems a hard saying, we submit another which we have not the presumption to attempt comment upon. "Love your enemies. *Pray for* those who spitefully use you." I don't suppose that anyone would maintain that these words are observed anywhere, on any considerable scale, in the world to-day.

Thirdly, the God of the answered prayer must be true to himself. It would be a contradiction in terms to expect the Christlike God to do an unchristian deed even in answer to prayer. This is not so academic a consideration as it sounds. Within a few years Christians by the million have been asking God's blessing on war. We do not say that there should never be prayer for success in arms. All we say is that we do not see how the blessing of the Christlike God can be asked on anything un-Christlike or anti-Christ. Where, however, shall we finally arrive if we walk this road? How far can we ask God's blessing on the processes of

business or politics? It is a relief to turn to something easier.

It may seem as if this treatment of prayer has shut God up to a narrow circle of responses to petitions. A little reflection will show that the effect is not, to the larger view, limiting. If the Christian doctrine of God means anything, it means that God desires the best for men. He is not seeking to shut them off from anything they ought to have—or in any way to stunt their growth. There is nothing in the Scripture to warrant a man's cutting himself off from anything that would make him a bigger man. If a man should refuse an education simply in the name of an ascetic self-sacrifice, he would interpret the doctrine of self-sacrifice in an unchristian way. So we are not to think of God as denying goods to man. He is giving to men to the utmost, to the limit of the wisdom which is his.

Suppose we have to do with a petition where the will of man cannot appreciably count, because the course of events is beyond our control. Cannot the fact that a will is set steadfastly in a particular direction count with the God who is ruling the world? If atomic conditions count to the outposts of the universe, why should not will-attitudes count?

Now comes the old familiar question.

Would not the result, if a good result, have come anyhow? It might have come indeed, but without the mark of the will of the petitioner upon it. Prayer has in every sense to be looked upon as a cooperative effort, a working together of God and man. The work together brings a different result from the work of either taken alone. Man could not work alone, and God's work is different when the human mark is upon it.

Does not the touch of man's hand upon a work that might otherwise be wholly from the divine hand spoil that work? Have I not myself indicated as much in remarks in this chapter? I have, in speaking of the blunders which men make in seeking freedom in the use of material things. As a matter of observation, without attempting to enter the mystery back of it all, man's touch is often an improving touch. We do not for an instant mean to imply that God could not attain all desirable results in the world of nature without man's aid. Simply as a matter of observation some most useful and beautiful results in the world of nature did wait till the coming of man. Unless by the exercise of inscrutable omniscience, God did not actually see some roses and some fruits till human scientists brought them to perfection. God and man work

together. There is now no untangling the threads and saying: This is from God and this is from man: but there is no reason to believe that when men are trained up to their possibilities as sons of God the human mark on the world may not be unmistakable and altogether good in a new creative week.

XIII

MUST REVELATION BE INFALLIBLE?

THE growth of the modern scientific methods of study of all processes purporting to carry a revelation of the Divine has seemed to many to destroy all possibility of getting good news—or any news—from God. Hostile critics of Christianity have time and again announced the overthrow of Christianity by critical processes, and many friends of Christianity have either accepted the verdict in despair or they have boldly accepted the challenge and have affirmed the Christian revelation to be infallible. They have not been successful in making out a case for the sort of infallibility they have claimed. The instant a revelation is put in a language, it is relative to that language. All sorts of relativities are upon us at once—relativities of thought, of the stage of civilization at which the message came, of the moral development of the writers. The first step that we are forced to take is to recognize the fact of this relativity. If we must have a revelation into which infallibility of the all-or-nothing type must enter as a necessity,

then we are of all men miserable, for the infallibility is not here.

Instead of falling into despair, however, let us look around us. Do we have such infallibility anywhere else? Can we be infallibly certain of anything in this world? How do we get knowledge of an external world, a world outside ourselves? How can I be infallibly certain that everything around me is not illusion? My senses give me reports of an outside world. But can I be infallibly certain of my senses? If they have once deceived me, can I ever thereafter be absolutely certain of them? They have deceived me many times. I have thought I have seen or heard or touched or smelt something when I have not. I have had imaginings and hallucinations, fancying I saw a world that did not exist. If I am set on having infallibility in this world, I am doomed to disappointment. I shall not find infallibility. I take the world on trust, the trust none the less trust because it is spontaneous and unconscious. Family life, social life, industrial processes, patriotism—none of them have abstract infallibility as their basis. They rest on something better, namely, practical certainty.

The truth is that the demand for this absolute infallibility is a survival of an absolutism

which has been productive of harm to the cause of truth. Such absolutism comes down from the day of absolute decrees from professedly absolute rulers, from scholastic methods of thought which must get everything within terms of an unquestionable syllogism. If we had it, infallibility would not make for life and liberty at all. It would be something to be unquestionably accepted. What sense would there be in reasoning about an altogether infallible revelation? The moment reasoning, even of the strictest kind, entered there would be the possibility of error. Could we be sure that we understood the revelation? No matter how plainly it might be stated there would inevitably be chance of misunderstanding. Even if we think of our scriptural revelation as infallible, we have to admit that the existence of so many differing sects means difference of understanding. It does not help us much to say that the misunderstandings are relative but that back at the beginning lay an absolute revelation. We are not back at the beginning. We do not now have anything that was back at the beginning. All that we have of revelation has the human stamp on it, and if the human stamp is there, it is relative and not infallible. Moreover, we believe that God has been in the human process all along, and,

therefore, has been using fallible instruments. It is a mere technicality that saves the absoluteness of the infallibility of the revelation to fall back on infallibility at the beginning. There is something of more importance than a technical infallibility and that is moral trustworthiness. I regret to say that I have heard some arguments for infallibility from well-intentioned men which made me fear for the moral safety of the pleaders, the arguments were so technical—so remote from life, so eager to take advantage even of doubtful moral advantage. For the sake of making out that some prophecies of Daniel or of the Apocalypse refer to the present days, to what extremities have some adherents of literal infallibility not gone?

To come to closer quarters with the question, however, let us ask ourselves what we would do with an absolute infallibility if we had it. One thing we would have to do—we would have forthwith to give up the idea of a moral God training children into likeness with himself. For in such training the essential is not obedience to a truth demonstrable as a mathematical proposition is demonstrable, but demonstrable as a moral insight—verifiable in life. If we look to the Revelation in the Scriptures, we are utterly at a loss to find any-

thing like a coercive element or like a flat dictum as to unmistakable truth accompanied by a peremptory "Take-it-or-leave-it." The method is persuasion. The kingdom of heaven is held out as a way of life. Life is a witness to itself. If it were an adjustment to technical infallibilities, it would be altogether unlike any life that we know.

The appeal in actual life is to a decision that affects the will. Life knowledge arises out of will activities. It is by doing the will of God that men come to know God. On what other basis could we have a kingdom of the morally worth-while? Suppose the eternal welfare of the saved and the eternal loss of the impenitent could be set before men by some utterly indubitable revelation—a miracle, let us say, recognizable as a miracle, certifying to the infallibility of the revelation. Let us assume that no intelligence could have the least doubt. We might conceive that vast hosts would swarm into the Kingdom, but would the Kingdom be then a realm of the moral? Hardly. Too many would have come not in responsiveness to the persuasion of the gospel but in a desire to escape hell. It is not the best evangelistic procedure to get men into the kingdom of heaven with heaven conceived of as the less of two evils.

Suppose the infallibility were something deducible by a process of logic, since we do not seize abstract infallibilities by life processes. Suppose the keen logicians were to reason out an absolute infallibility of divine revelation. Then we would have to take the word of the logicians—which we never do in life as we know it. Or we might turn the kingdom of heaven over to the logicians. The kingdom of heaven cometh by logic and the logicians take it by logic. Not altogether a moral result. A man might be a keen logician without thereby being qualified for citizenship in the kingdom of heaven.

Try to bring the thought of the acceptance of abstract infallibility into the atmosphere of the Gospels. What the people of the day of Jesus had always heard emphasized was infallibility. They had been used to the thought of an infallibility of law, with all sorts of hedges about the law to protect its infallibility. They must have become sick and tired of infallibility. So they said of Jesus, "He speaketh with authority and not as the scribes." The scribes were specialists in infallibility. Jesus came speaking out of life. Living souls gladly at any time exchange a technical infallibility for the authority of life itself.

When men began to seek absolute and categorical statements from Jesus he responded by speaking in parables, evidently seeking to screen off the truth from all but prepared minds. Never man spoke more clearly than Jesus, but the clearness was for those who had ears to hear. He that hath ears to hear let him hear! What could make larger place for the relative in Christian understanding than that? We are not surprised when the students of church history tell us that the days of the founding of the church were days of the utmost profusion and diversity and variety of belief. It seems that the spirit of Jesus somehow caused an astonishing, almost tropical, luxuriance of religious belief. This is what we would expect if religion is an affair of persons. Personal influences always lead to such profusion. We repeat that Jesus would not hear of any arbitrary coercion. The temptations of Jesus took the form of appeals to him—for the sake of quick result—to use practically coercive measures in the founding of his kingdom. To have turned stone into bread for the multitude would have made a practically irresistible argument, especially to the hungry. To leap down unharmed from the Temple, would have been an irresistible argument to those looking for miraculous certification of the

claims of Messiahship. To seize the reins of temporal power would have led to the irresistible conquest of the minds that think in political terms. All these would have been forms of coercion. Jesus would have none of them.

Once more, think of the limitations of a Book infallible and absolute. The nearest absolute we could conceive would be the thought and atmosphere not of our day but of a day in the far-distant future. Suppose we had a revelation whose scientific conceptions were those of the final complete discoveries instead of the science of ancient Israel, whose historical narratives would be in line with the last word that can ever be uttered by archæology, whose ethics would be those of the fiftieth or one hundredth century A. D. Of what use would the book be to us? It would be full of enigmas that no twentieth-century knowledge could decipher. Taking the Book as we find it, we can at least understand its Babylonian science and its priest-written history and the traces of early nomad ethics. Understanding these, we can keep them in their proper place and perspective, and use the perennially life-giving truth for the sake of our lives. If we are tempted to disparage the Revelation as we have it, let us ask our-

selves what other method would be better calculated to help upward in man's struggle out of the lower into the higher than a Book steeped in the very life of those that broke the path for us in making their own ascent. The heart of the revelation is that God is like Christ. The Revelation does not have to be technically infallible to carry that good news.

By this time have we not limited God to the relative, so completely that we have curtailed his power? It all depends on the point of view. If we say, "Think of a God who has to use all these relative factors," we find ourselves in one mood. We can get out of that mood quickly by urging ourselves to think of a God who *can* use all these factors. To employ a most homely and unworthy illustration, consider different scientific minds engaged in a great practical task of some sort—an engineer bridging a stream, or doctors fighting a plague. One engineer cannot work unless he has instruments and materials of the most nearly perfect construction. One doctor cannot accomplish anything unless he is surrounded by conditions like those of the most scientific hospital. Another engineer or another doctor makes the best of what materials are at hand. The bridge is built. The plague is stopped. Which type of mind is best under human con-

ditions? The marvel of the scriptural revelation is that the Inspiring Mind could take all sorts of men, in all sorts of conditions, at all sorts of times, in all sorts of places and through them make a revelation of himself as like unto Christ. All sorts and conditions of men! These are the factors that must be used if we are to have a revelation of any consequence for a world like ours. We may not attain to technical infallibility, but we can find moral certainty, and find it in life. In short, the quest for technical infallibility does not, under human conditions, argue for the wisdom of the seeking mind when the quest is pushed too far. I once knew a boy who would never make reply when asked to tell the time of day. His reason was that inasmuch as the hands of the watch were constantly moving, he could not tell the exact truth. If he said that it was one o'clock, it was past one before the words were out of his mouth. If he started to say "One minute past one," so that it would be that time when the words were uttered, he was saying what was not true at the beginning of his utterance. The boy broke away from all this when he began to see that search for absolute exactness of this sort shows a limitation of intelligence.

Students of church history are to-day saying

much about the illusions which have beset believers in pursuit of revealed truth. Some of us have been greatly disturbed thereby. We have been told of old that a good result will not follow the belief in a lie: we have felt that increasing moral strength which follows religious beliefs is the surest proof of the truth of those beliefs. We are quite upset when the modern student tells that the belief in illusion has been a force in progress, and we even may imagine that somehow the divine veracity has been impugned. We may steady ourselves by remembering that there is a difference between delusion and illusion. An illusion is not a lie, but suppose it were. Is it a limitation in God that he can so overrule the false views in which men honestly believe as to bring them to the right goal at last? What one of the heroes of the Scriptures ever saw his expectations literally fulfilled? The Messianic kingdom never literally appeared, the Apocalyptic dream never literally materialized, the prophecies never literally came true. One difficulty was that by the time fulfillment was due the prophetic spirit had outgrown the desire for literal fulfillment. We are in danger of the abstract again. The belief which sent Christopher Columbus across the western sea was mixed with error. If Columbus had known

a little more, he might not have sailed. He lived up to the best he knew, and achieved a result far beyond any possibility of the imagination of his day. So also with spiritual explorers.

XIV

THE ALLEGED IRREDEEMABLE ELEMENT IN HUMAN NATURE

ONE mark of our time is a certain lack of sureness as to how far redeeming grace, or any force, can go in improving human nature. There is still the ring of confidence in Christian testimony, but the old-time certainty of complete sanctification of human nature, is not so much in evidence. The Methodists, who once held forth as one of their chief doctrines the possibility of the cleansing of all parts of man's nature from evil, do not especially lay emphasis on sanctification to-day. In some ways the change is for the better. There is a larger understanding of what is involved in the redemption of entire human nature, there is more genuine modesty in Christian profession. Still, there is the question in many thoughtful minds as to whether human nature is ever completely redeemable, whether God is not limited in dealing with the moral and spiritual possibilities of the human beings which he has called into existence.

This does not mean a revival of the belief in

total depravity. That doctrine arose more out of theological demands than out of direct observation of human life. The present skepticism is the product of a scientific age and bases itself upon psychological study of the subconscious, or subliminal, or unconscious self. It would be preposterous indeed if I should lay claim to special knowledge in this field, but I shall try to do here what I am doing in so many other fields where I lack a specialist's knowledge. I shall try to show that the agreed-upon results of experts do not seem to warrant so pessimistic a conclusion as is common in some quarters.

I have no desire to raise quibbles at the outset, beyond stating that it is hard to see how a self could really be unconscious in any strict sense. Selfness means consciousness, intelligence, self-direction. Dependence upon a body, of course, brings about the state which we call unconsciousness, but to take such unconsciousness and make it a chief phase of the soul's life seems to me extreme. There are aspects of the soul's life, however, which give rise to this doctrine of the unconscious. We willingly admit the facts upon which the theory is based. We admit that the soul is set upon by impulses that seem to start below the threshold of consciousness, and without

invitation to push themselves over the threshold, making at times a serious moral problem. About the moment a man feels sure of freedom from temptation a new temptation lifts itself up apparently out of this down-cellar state and a new grim fight begins. None of us is ever certain of what he will do in an altogether new situation. A friend of mine once declared that he felt perfectly sure that he would be panic-stricken if set upon by highwaymen, and that he would be fairly cool if he were caught in a burning building filled with an audience of people. By curious turns of fate he was beset by highwaymen and he was caught in a burning building at a public meeting. He was perfectly cool in dealing with the highwaymen and practically panic-stricken in the fire. He had guessed wrong in both cases. Moreover, in both cases it seemed to him that some automatic mechanism had taken him in control and that his own self-conscious power to make decisions was in abeyance. We have all had experiences somewhat of this kind. The question is whether we must think of this realm of life as in any sense outside the operation of, or beyond the power of, the forces which we call divine. Can the light of the spiritual purposes of the kingdom of heaven be carried into this region which we call the down-cellar

part of the mind? A cellar may be a useful part of the building if it is properly cared for.

Let us start with the admitted relation of the self to the body. No matter what our theory of the soul, whether it be Bowne's substantial self or James' stream of consciousness, its dependence on bodily conditions is manifest. It is clear also that much that the self feels to be evil has a bodily root, that there are unhealthy or morbid bodily processes which unhealthily or morbidly affect the mind. All this has been known for centuries. We know it in more detail to-day than did our ancestors. Now, much depends upon whether we think of the body as inherently evil or not. I do not necessarily mean that many to-day would think of matter as evil in the old sense, but I refer to a type of Puritanism of an exaggerated type which still lingers on among us, or among some few of us. Can we without immeasurable imaginativeness conceive of the bodily processes as so controlled that the morbid reactions of the mind shall be done away? This is no strain on the imagination. A long step ahead is taken as soon as we see that in the large per cent of harmful bodily reactions on the mind we are dealing not with sin but with disease. When we reflect that much of the strength of Jesus went to the relief of

mental disorder, we may well ask ourselves if there is any more Christlike work than the scientific search for the control of the forces which will make for the mental health which comes out of bodily health.

For some of the despair about the possibilities of making all the life moral the psychoanalysts are to blame. They have made too much of the sex influence on the self. No one could deny the power of the sex influence on the self. The stimulus of this side of organic life, of course, has consequences for the self, but it is a mistake to make the sex impulse all-determining. Probably these theorists had to go to extremes before the measure of truth in their theory could be fully brought out. Why should they say that a sex-craving is the most powerful force acting from the body on the mind in the face of the power of the hunger-craving? I know the situation produced by the one feeling is not parallel to that produced by the other: all I am doing is to point out the danger of exaggerating the power of the sex-stimulus. Here, again, there is no reason why the sex-life may not be so controlled as to be altogether worthy. It is now so done in multitudes of instances. He who would start out to prove that the sex impulse will make it impossible for the work of spiritual

improvement to go far in human nature is obsessed with the study of the abnormal and unusual. Of course the attempt to reduce all phases of human activity to sex activities is as absurd as all such unifying enterprises usually are. An adventurous Freudian has told us that the sex instinct in man shows itself in strong interest in machinery. On this basis I suppose that it would be possible to prove that a modern steel mill is an outcropping of the sex-impulse.

Again, much of the apparently wild impulse that comes up to us from the realm of the subconscious is not wild at all but only unconventional. In dealing with the period of adolescence in the human being it is very easy for older persons to get the notion that the outbreaks of the adolescent will are evil. They may not be evil at all, but good. It is about time we recognized that if it were not for these outbreaks, apparently so anarchic, the world would soon come to stagnation. Take the change for the better in the college system of instruction to-day as over against that of fifty years ago. Who has made the change? Wise educators have done their share, indeed, but their part has been to meet the demands of the adolescent mind. The resort to the elective system was the first step ahead. By the simple process of not electing certain

courses the students eliminated many such courses from college. The yeasty period of ferment in the adolescent mind, the spirit of rebellion that will have its way, is a useful factor in human society. We have of late years made the discovery that the adolescent age is peculiarly the age of liability to conversion. God, it is said, is especially near at the time of adolescence. If he is near in the sense of making appeal to adolescence, he is also near in the sense of prompting them to utterance. We would not in any measure minimize the seriousness of the moral and spiritual problem set before us by adolescence, but there is no need of minimizing the divine possibilities. The older generations have indeed their own glorious function to perform. They are not, however, to assume too much superiority over the younger generation. The wild oats of adolescence may be wild only from the point of view of the cultivator of tame oats. Every few months we are treated to a review of present-day civilization by youthful critics. I do not know that the writers are often adolescents, but they usually write as if they were. The older generation raises an outcry over the youthful follies of such books. All the books commonly signify is that in a period following a war, which was the folly of old men, the

youngsters are exercising their privilege of saying bluntly and rawly how things seem to them—at the risk of making fools of themselves. Incidentally, they say many good things. “Old men for judgment and young men for war.” That may be the way it ought to be, but let us not forget that, taking the whole field of conflict into view, the greatest war in history came by the votes of old men, and that the fiercest protests against war to-day come from the lips of young enthusiasts. If all this is, as some sneer, just the ebullition of late adolescence, by all means let us have more of late adolescence.

Again, to get back more directly to that which moves below the threshold of consciousness, let us remember that little can get into the cellar without going down the stairs from the upper rooms. A bodily craving can, of course, set the mind to thinking, but the mass of the thoughts which seem to rise from below were once above. For example, the eye sees many things in the course of the day of which it takes no particular note, but which the memory may recall later. During all the waking hours the senses are busy with an amazing multitude of things any one of which may register itself strongly enough to be remembered, though without attracting par-

ticular attention at the time of the first impression. There is no moral fault to be proved upon a man for what he sees. The criticism can be passed as to what a man looks at, what he harbors in his mind. Some students of the mind say that they can tell what a man is by his dreams. This may be true if the dreams come out of the man's persistent holding of ideas or pictures before his imagination. It is not true if it means that a man's character is revealed by anything and everything that passes in a dream. In dreams the will power of selection seems to be quiescent and the mind is at the mercy of the law of association. The claim that we can tell what a man is by his dreams has, of course, more pertinence when applied to daydreams, for then the mind is making its selections. The important point is the possibility of selection—selection, not repression. Selection implies a range of choice. Repression may defeat its own object, for the determination to keep something out of consciousness may in the nature of things be the very force that keeps it in. There is nothing inconceivable in so purifying the selective power of consciousness that it can be depended on always to choose the best.

Here a word may be in order to those who see the so-called subconscious as the sphere

where the Divine almost exclusively works. The late William Sanday once threw out a suggestion as to the divine and human in Christ. He made the self-conscious the seat of the human in Christ, and the subliminal the seat of the divine. This is valuable as indicating the method by which the divine so often works, apparently by sending impulses into consciousness from this subthreshold realm. We must remember, though, that what comes up has likely first been sent down. Moreover, the most remarkably selective consciousness mankind has known—that in Christ—is, it would seem, entitled to some claim to divinity.

Our increasing attention to the so-called subconscious ought to bring us a rich harvest not of evil but of good. It gives us a method of dealing with human wills. It enables us to feel that if we can get truth stated with enough cogency to push it into the lower realm, it will some day return to consciousness ripened by the half-conscious processes of the soul, so that when it appears we may make it the basis of an appeal for a momentous decision. Appeals sprung upon a will, with no connection with the past of that will, lead nowhere. There must be a rooting in an underlying soil. Likewise it is possible to make use of this increasing knowledge in the development of our own

thinking. It is possible to sink conceptions into these deeper strata, allowing them to move along by their own laws in the realm of the half-conscious till they emerge fully ripe. Or, to change slightly the words of William James, it is possible to steep our thoughts in the juices of the subliminal.

The question as to the abstract perfection of a human soul in this life we do not care about. The ideal before us is the perfection of God, stated in human terms. If we can secure in human beings fixity of direction and constant movement toward that ideal, we have solved the problem. Time will attend to all else that is needful—a consideration especially pertinent in view of the Christian belief in immortality. The main duty is to begin early enough. If we do not raise abstract and artificial problems by saying that to break the law in one particular is to break it in all, there is no reason for not maintaining that it is practically possible—that is to say, possible as we use the terms in human conditions—for a life so to be brought under divine forces from the beginning as to go through life without serious transgression. This would not be negatived by the fact that such a life itself would feel most keenly the distance between itself and the divine ideal.

XV

CURRENT CRITICISM OF THE CHURCH

SOME have felt that the divine forces of the world are almost hopelessly limited through having to work through churches. In this day in particular the church is under fierce attack. One type of historian, believing in an economic interpretation of history, maintains that the church, like other institutions, is simply the product of the economic forces of a particular time: hence any claim to especial authority is vain, since the church itself is the expression of the authority, so to speak, of the material forces. Another historian, thoroughly realistic in type, delights to bring before us all the seaminess of church history. The leaders of the church have, at some crises especially, been a disreputable set—politicians of the worst stripe. The social radical tells us that at the present moment the church is simply the organ and mouthpiece of the possessing classes—that loyalty to the working man is impossible in a church. Then swarms of others tell us of commonplace preaching, of

unenlightened and slothful heedlessness to important interests, of the contradiction between profession and practice in the lives of members. So it goes, till we get the impression—in fact, we are told so—that if the Lord Jesus came back to earth, he would avoid the churches as a pest. How can anything divine work through the church? If the revelation of Christianity is confined to the church channel, it will never get far.

Let us pull ourselves together and see where we are. To begin with, few church leaders to-day would say that the organized church is the only instrument through which the divine forces work. Believing as they do in an immanent God, almost all church leaders see the hand of God at work in realms outside the church. Almost all are willing to concede that if the church does not do its work, it will fall and that some other instrument will be raised up, speaking now, of course, of present church organizations. All make a distinction between the visible and the invisible Church—the organized institution and the group of real believers. With the enlarging vision of these later days most churches admit that whoever has the Spirit of Christ belongs to Christ, whether he belongs to the organized church or not.

For the purpose of this discussion, however, we keep to the organized church. It will probably be granted at the outset that Christianity is limited to some kind of organization in the doing of the things that call for organization. That would seem to be clear enough. It would seem to be clear also that some aspects of Christian life call for organization. We are now in the realm where the ordinary laws of arithmetical addition do not count. Two and two persons indeed make just four persons, but the addition makes more than the power of four persons. Added together just as units we have just four. Organized together as at least the beginnings of a social body we have some powers—even some organs—which could not have been produced if the members worked separately. For the hearing of the truth and for the proclamation of the truth the gospel is indeed limited to some form of organization. The vision of the apostle was of a Body of Christ which would on a larger scale do for Christ what his actual body did for him while he was on earth—put him in touch with a material world, serve as an instrument of contact with men, and above all be itself the revelation of the divine. By his own laws God cannot do as much through persons working separately as through persons built

together as an organism. Hence the necessity of a church.

As soon as we begin to consider such an organism somebody raises the old question about infallibility. Must not the church be infallible if it is to be the bearer of a divine revelation? Now, how strange it is that men cannot believe in the good news of God unless there be an infallible certification of that news. If the news were just a piece of information, like other pieces of information, we might ask for infallibly certain news tests. The good news is not just of this class. It is to make its own appeal and it is to call men to verify its truth by right living. Here, again, infallibility would be out of place and harmful. As a matter of fact, infallibility does harm in the one church organization which claims to be infallible. The Roman Catholic Church is not infallible now and never has been. Papal infallibility has the practical expediency of a court of last resort like the Supreme Court at Washington. Has anyone ever called our Supreme Court infallible? Yet when we look into Roman Catholic history it would be about as foolish to call the Pope infallible as to call the Supreme Court infallible in any strict sense. The teaching that the church is infallible does harm to the members of that church. It

stamps out the spirit of free inquiry as to the church itself. To be sure, the Roman Church handles the situation brought about by the dogma of papal infallibility with great skill. If the believer will concede the absolute authority of the church, he can believe—and does—almost anything else he pleases. The church would not dare push her claims to infallibility too far. The whole life of the church would rebel. We all rebel against infallibilities. They are of little use in advancing the work of social organisms.

Now, as to the weakness and positive wickedness of church leaders at times when the church laid claims to divinity. Let us remember that in other days, and always, organizational features have inherent weaknesses. They are purely instrumental and in some of their aspects only of secondary significance. Indispensable as these organizational features are, the managers—or the manipulators—of them are not the church. The church may not be at all represented by its officials. To take a single illustration, I once knew a church whose officials were moved by anything but religious considerations. They were rich men of the world. They desired in the pulpit attractive oratory which would let vexing questions alone, in the choir artistic musical

ability of the highest order obtainable, in the pews well-to-do pew-renters of assured social standing. This was the sentiment of the official board—a board of conventional religious attitudes and utterly worldly aims. If I wish to consider a church with completely wrong ideals, I always think of that church. So much for the leadership. The mass of membership were as good, and as godly, people as I have ever known. The highest types of saintliness I have ever known were in that church. Of course it was a reflection on them that they permitted such leadership over them. The truth is that they did not take the leadership seriously enough, and that was a fault. For themselves, though, they put the religious opportunities in the first place. The heart of the church was sound. Official attitudes of churches as churches did not count so much then as now. The emphasis was more on what the individual got out of the service. With that limitation the church was as good a church as I have ever known.

May there not be a hint here toward the interpretation of some of the more perplexing passages in church history? How often have we heard that the great creeds of the church can have nothing of truth in them because of the way the councils framed them? Just

think of aiming at truth by means of the vote of a council, many of whose members were actuated wholly by political motives! How can we frame a theory of the divinity of Christ by taking a vote in a council? Historical critics of Christianity pour no end of scorn and of ridicule upon the method by which the church has framed its creedal statements. Yet it requires only slight acquaintance with the way organizations actually proceed to see that there may have been another explanation altogether. The delegates may have been representing the sentiment of church constituencies, of multitudes of well-meaning people whose spirit was the real spirit of the church. The creeds were not so much the statements of theories as of demands that were to be kept in mind in the phrasings of theories. The delegates themselves may have had only the remotest interest in doctrine, and yet may have felt and yielded to the pressure of a demand. It would be rather a humorous thesis to maintain that every congressman and legislator who voted for Prohibition in the United States in the campaign that led to the constitutional amendment was himself desperately interested in the anti-alcoholic warfare as such. Similarly, a creedal or other utterance may have been a genuine

voice of the church, regardless of the character and performances of the delegates at the time of the voting. If it be objected that this is to give to public opinion in the church in other days a greater place than it actually had, we call attention to the fact that all recent study of the processes in the church in earlier ages is making larger and larger place for the thought and feeling of the voiceless mass of the membership—voiceless so far as their own actual utterance was concerned, but not voiceless in the subtle creation of popular feeling which the priests then, as now, knew so skillfully how to interpret. No matter what may have been true in other days, it is true to-day that the thought of the mass of the people does not go unrepresented in church utterances.

Now we arrive at the question thrust upon us by the insistence of the radicals. Is it not true that the church always seeks to block the progress of the truth, especially scientific and social truth? No doubt it appears so, and in case after case is so. Before we decide whether this blocking of the truth is so deadly a matter as to shut out the claim that the divine works through the church or not, let us get closer to actual procedure. At the first announcement of a new scientific or social theory the leaders of the church are likely to utter alarmed out-

cries. This is not because they have any right to an opinion on the theory, but because they interpret theories in the light of what is likely to be the near practical consequence. Father Tyndall's explanation was that when the church leaders condemned Galileo they were standing not against a scientific theory as such but against the harmful practical consequences of acceptance of the theory. Before we smile too much at this explanation let us recall the remark of Huxley to the effect that in his opinion the church doctors had the best of it in the Galileo controversy. The main mass of the membership at any period are indeed likely to become alarmed at the strange and unusual, until the new truth fits itself beneficially into the order of things. The greatest adjustment to a theory which the church has ever made was the adjustment to the Copernican theory. The revolutionary nature of the theory of evolution was as nothing compared to that of the Copernican theory. Yet the church finally made its adjustment. The processes of such adjustment are first opposition, then toleration, and finally acceptance. These are just the processes that any mind naturally goes through.

As to social questions, the church holds the ideas of the mass of persons busy with the

affairs of life, too busy to do much studying on their own account. Let but the church once see the moral bearings of a social process and it takes the appropriate moral attitude. The most serious count against the church is its slowness on social questions, but even here the church moves faster than any other large social organization, and much faster than she herself used to move. Think of the quickness with which the church is opposing itself to the reactionary elements established in power by the Great War. There is no doubt that the church lost its bearings in the war. It certainly should have kept the ideals higher and should have made itself felt at the Peace Conference. Even so, the church is recovering. The situation is better than at the close of the Civil War. Search through church papers from 1866 to 1876 and see if you can find anything which approaches the alertness of social spirit which marks many a church utterance to-day. As for the church's being the mouth-piece of financial interests, that simply is not true. The churches which contain the largest proportion of wealthy members have spoken out most fearlessly on the dangers of wealth.

The churches are so broken up into separate and warring sects! How can they claim a divine authority? "Warring" is too strong a

word, and they do not differ on the all-essential emphasis on the good life. They can come together; let us hope they will do so soon, but not so soon as to overlook the importance of diversity and variety of the expression of the Christian life. It is as important that the richness and effulgence of Christian life be set forth in manifold variety as to that we attain to one great organization. When the organization comes, it should come with provision for the liberty of minorities to speak out the newer revelations that have come to them, or that they think have come to them. We need new emphasis on the value of the "remnant" in the Christian community.

No—the church as an organization is not infallible, nor perfect, nor even ideal. The proper aim, however, is not the building of a church as an organization but the creation of a Christian community. The ends-in-themselves are the Christian lives. All else is instrumental—its worth to be judged by its fitness for the end in view. If we can get away from all types of abstract infallibilities and think of the concrete task of building actual lives up into spiritual strength, we can see abundant means at hand for that purpose. The question is as to whether the church can do what is expected of her. Many who accept

the Christian ideal doubt the ability of the church to put the ideal into effect. There is no fate—no inherent evil—which blocks such realization. The very imperfection of the organization is a challenge to the free souls who belong to the organization.

XVI

IS THE SOCIAL QUESTION INSOLUBLE?

ONE may admit all that I have said about the church and yet insist that the church cannot do more than produce a high type of individual saintliness. Within the circle of virtues which can be called strictly individualistic the church has indeed developed a noble type of piety. The glory of the church has been in her saints. Without denying the greatness of this glory the discouraged student of human affairs to-day feels that there are at least three questions utterly beyond the power of Christianity, organized or unorganized, to solve—the social, or, rather, the industrial question, the international question, and the racial question. The only dangerous skepticism abroad in the land to-day is as to the practicability of the Christian ideals. Whatever the reason the skeptic feels that the divine forces have exhausted themselves in getting the ideals before the world. There is no power to put these ideals into forceful operation.

Almost all students who talk thus make a

most interesting and far-reaching admission, namely, that if the Christian ideals cannot be put into effect, we are lost; there is no help for us anywhere else. So it is not a question as to whether we shall consider the ideals of the gospel as compared with pagan or materialistic ideals. The question is as to whether the ideals of Christianity can be made to work. If they cannot, there is nothing left for us but to make the best shift we can to get along in the twilight of civilizations fast passing into night.

Admittedly, again, the one force through which we could work for the better day in social, international and racial relations is that of public opinion. If we could once get this powerful force itself Christianized, the work would be well on toward accomplishment. The one force which acts like a solvent of even the greatest evils is this force of public sentiment. It is the power which determines industrial disputes, makes and unmakes war, assigns races the places in which they shall stand in the world's regard. The force of public opinion is admitted at the start, which sets the problem definitely before us. We know with whom and with what we have to deal.

A further admission is almost equally per-

continent. The public opinion of almost the whole world at the present hour is convinced of the evils of the present social situation, using the word "social" in its large sense. Practically all over the world is a realization that the existing order of things must be seriously modified. In some revolutionary circles there is talk of complete overthrow of all existing institutions, but the folly of such talk is no more thoroughly realized to-day than in Russia, where society is now going back and trying to pick up some things thrown over in the hurried rush forward of a few years ago. Everywhere, to a less degree in America perhaps than elsewhere, there is virtual admission that things must be changed, the problem being in some countries not that of arousing public opinion to action but of preventing public opinion from going too far. Can Christianity control public opinion in the name of the divine and human values which are the heart of the gospel? We do not expect the church out of its own resources as an organization to do all this. The church cannot of herself take over all the printing presses, schools, and public platforms. She can, however, stand at the center of the conflict, insisting that all public opinion makers shall keep the ideals of Christianity, or the spirit

of Christianity, always at the front. Moreover, she must highly resolve to welcome as Christian all agencies, of whatever kind and name, which are fundamentally Christian in spirit. This is not a task for merely organized Christianity as such. Now is a time when we must hail as brothers in Christ Jesus all workers everywhere who are working in the Christ spirit.

To begin with the social question. Here the attack is in the last analysis upon poverty. The fight must finally be carried the world round. Since we must begin somewhere we begin at home, or in Christian lands. The first step is to get into the common consciousness what all economic students are now saying, namely, that poverty is conquerable and preventable. It is not Christian to preach wholesale submission to poverty. There are no doubt individual cases where we recognize that the persons are likely to remain in poverty. The fact in such instances might just as well be recognized. Again, in some situations to preach that poverty can be abolished may lead the hot-headed to think that the whole victory can be won by a raid of the "have-nots" on the "haves." With all allowance for possible misunderstanding, however, the truth remains that it is Christian duty to preach the abolition

of poverty. The final revelation of the Christian spirit is not what can be accomplished with little, but what can be accomplished with much. The test of Christianity is not adversity but prosperity. The ultimate saintliness is to be not that of abstinence from material, but the control of material. We need more Christians who can become prosperous without having the idea of God "fattened out of them," to use Lowell's phrase.

Certain considerations, then, should be sunk deep into the public mind. Without attempting an exhaustive list we mention some to show the practicability of the steps which would admittedly bring about the abolition of poverty in any reasonable use of the word. It would not abolish poverty to make a redistribution of all goods now in existence and to give every man a like share with every other man. The evils of the existing scheme of distribution cry aloud for correction, but mere redistribution would not advance us far, except as it affected the temper of mind of the public. We shall speak of this a little later. We are thinking of mere productivity. At the outset we shall have to resolve to give more honor to the productive scientist in whatever sphere he works than we have done before. If we can get the scientist to think of himself as a

public servant, a large share of victory will already have been won. In the realm of pure science where no money reward is likely we already have as lofty types of self-sacrifice as can be found anywhere. In some of the practical sciences, like the study of the causes of disease, we have the same spirit. In the realm of engineering as such, however, the application of scientific principles to practical tasks has been looked upon as a money-making affair. The engineer's ideals have too often been just those of amassing wealth for all that wealth brings. Some of the recognition that wealth brings—and some other things that wealth cannot bring—can come if public sentiment more and more hails the man of science as servant and saviour of the community. That was a wise remark that a social student made concerning China: "What China needs is the scientific method working in the spirit of Jesus." Every other nation and social group stands in the same need. We need more material, brought from the earth with the purpose of Jesus.

The next factor which the Christian student must consider in connection with poverty is the pressure of population on the earth's resources. Recurring to China for the moment, Christianity renders social benefit by miti-

gating somewhat the pressure for sons, a pressure brought about through the teaching of ancestor worship. One trouble with China is that too many Chinese are born for the resources of the land as at present utilized. It would not help the distress of China much to utilize her resources, especially her mineral resources, more fully, for with the increase of wealth would come an increase of population, so long as the present emphasis on the family and the requirements of ancestor worship remain in force. There is needed a doctrine of the worth of the individual as such. The preaching of the same doctrine in Christian lands with reference to the rights of the child yet to be born would help immensely in the solution of the poverty problem. Very likely the parents able to give their children large educational equipment for service in the world bring forth too few children; and the parents at the other end of the scale of opportunity bring forth too many. Some day this whole problem of the virtual creation of new lives—for that is what it amounts to—will be lifted up into the light of Christian principle. All we wish now to say is that this phase of the problem is not inherently insoluble.

If we were to utter in one word what the world needs for the outright mastery of pov-

erty, that word would be cooperative service. To bring about such a spirit we have to organize society more thoroughly on a basis of justice. Men must see that they are being fairly dealt with. It will have to be made clear at the outset that whatever burdens are to be borne in the struggle toward the new order must be more equitably shared. Is it fair that laborers take the heavy end of an industrial crisis, by which I mean the perils of actual undernourishment? Is it fair that in the adjustments that inevitably must recurrently take place between employers and employed the employed must stand alone face to face with the mass of organized wealth behind the employer? Does a worker by working faithfully through a half a lifetime not acquire some vested interest in the work—at least an immunity against being “fired” without chance of a hearing? It is in a spirit of justice and fairness especially to the worker that we shall have to approach the new day. To urge the worker to larger activity for the sake of larger productivity now, with the worker feeling that a disproportionate share of the proceeds goes to men who never do a stroke of work, is a farce. The worker may have it all wrong, but the impression in the mind of the worker is the potent factor. It

will take more than merely verbal expressions of desire to do justice to workers to get the response which will lead to the largest productivity. We need better mutual understanding all around. The sooner we get over the notion that there is any particular obduracy or stubbornness about the laboring man beyond what is common to man, the better it will be for us.

A recognition of the human elements into which the tangle must be resolved is desperately needed. One of the odd phases of all labor disputes is the public's failure to understand the resentment of laboring men at having things given them or done for them. Samuel Gompers' outbreak that "welfare" work is hell-fare work is, in the minds of many, a mark of the depravity of the working classes. Yet the resentment of the workers against having things done for them—especially when the welfare work is made a substitute for increase of wages—is one of the most human feelings in the whole range of human feelings. It is an expression of the feeling of fairness and justice. So with the wage-earner's talk about wage-earning as slavery. Many a social student thinks he has disposed of all the meaning in this characterization by pointing out that the condition of the wage-earner is

altogether different from that of the Negro under Southern slavery. All this misses the point—which is the protest of the worker against the lack of self-direction in his own work. No amount of paternalistic welfare work can make up for that fundamental lack. No paternalist is good enough to tell a worker what is good for him without that worker's consent. We are in the realm of motive now. The most powerful motives must be touched before the worker will do his full part in bringing forth the full productivity of the earth.

When all is said and done, however, is it not irrational to suppose that the whole industrial order will come to the adoption of a motive of self-sacrificing service substantially Christian? Here, again, we have to be on guard against the wrong motive of service. Self-sacrifice does not mean self-abasement, or self-contempt, or self-neglect. So great a New-Testament scholar as James Moffatt points out that in the command to love our neighbor as ourself the greater the regard for self, in the true sense, the greater the regard for the neighbor. The call for a spirit of service does not mean that every man is to neglect his own business for that of his neighbor. It means that the profit motive is not to be the determining motive. It means that the basal

necessities of all are to be attended to before there are special privileges for any. "All"—at least all who are willing to work—"are to have bread before any have cake." The spirit of devotion to the common good is to rule, but that spirit would not rule if men took to disparaging essential manhood in themselves.

Some of the people now work with the spirit of service all the time, and all work some of the time. The physicians and surgeons, for the most part, have built up for themselves a code of ethics which keeps the interest of the public in the first place. A physician who would find a cure for a disease and then try to treat the cure as a private monopoly would speedily find himself in danger of ostracism by his fellows. We shall make a long stride forward when all business is put on the professional basis of public service. All of the people can work with a motive of public service, as in war-time or times of vast catastrophe. It would indeed be a sad comment on human nature if catastrophe and war were the only agencies that could ever draw forth the full powers of the wills of men.

The entire economic problem to-day is being restudied from the point of view of motive. No student can be found who will maintain that the motive of service will not work as

well as the motive of self-seeking. Two motives must work together—a rational regard for humanity in oneself and a like regard for humanity in others. No study has revealed anything intractable which makes the conquest of poverty and the founding of a material base for Christian society out of the question. We are not shut up to the conception of the church as a little group of believers existing in a world of perverse and greedy selfishness. Admittedly the earth can bring forth enough, admittedly the motives can be touched which lead to the Christianization of the social order. The Spirit of the Lord is on no prophets more truly than upon those who call for the conquest of the riches of the world for the sake of the spiritual riches.

XVII

MUST CHRISTIANITY BE THWARTED BY WAR?

THE national, or the international question, has to do mainly with the possibility of getting rid of war. Many students of Christianity feel that this is the supreme test of its efficacy—whether it can carry out the promise of the angel song and bring peace on earth. The task is hard enough to test any system to the inmost heart. Let us, however, draw near enough to see the difficulties just as they are.

One bitter, discouraged brother tells us that there is no hope, because war is a form of social insanity which carries generation after generation away from all its moral moorings. A community of persons, every one of them individually sane, can be swept into a social insanity against which all effort is empty and vain. War is an international lynching frenzy. It is not worth while to struggle against it. The best course for the church is to adjust itself to the present international order as to a crooked and perverse generation, to preach the ideal as a witness for any who will hear, but

not to look for the abolition of war. The utmost that can be hoped is some slight mitigation of its horrors. The profitable field for Christianity is elsewhere, in teaching individual Christians how to live in this crazy world! Some of the despairing accept the notion that this planet is the lunatic asylum of the universe.

We may admit that war is a form of social insanity, but that does not end the inquiry. The next question is as to whether the insanity is curable or not. Does anyone maintain that the social insanity that breaks out in war is founded upon any actual cerebral crises in men which have left an unfortunate mark on the race?

A close examination of wars—at least those in recent times whose origins we can scrutinize—warrants the statement that, so far as the mass of the people of a nation are concerned, war has come out of the best side of human life. No war can be started until some way is found to baptize the cause with a sacred aim. It makes no difference whether the people are fooled or not, so far as this argument is concerned. Assume that wars are started by knaves, for their own wicked purposes, the people do not respond with any wicked aim. The impulse at the

heart of warring nations is sound. They think they are struggling for liberty, for conscience, for humanity. How far would a war-maker get if he should say, bluntly, "There are mines or oil wells or forest stretches or arable lands yonder which we ought to have"? In our day at least the people would rise against him in wrath. The war has to be presented as a fight for a right. Mothers will not give their sons to die in causes which are baldly presented as selfish. The people may be deceived into war, but the deceivers have to approach them on their best side. If war comes out of crowd contagion, it comes out of a contagion which moves the people toward what they at least think is right. It may be that the causes of the Great War were at bottom commercial and industrial and imperialistic. There cannot be the slightest doubt that Germany and France and England thought they were each fighting for self-preservation, and that America thought she was fighting to make the world safe for democracy. It may be that the leader who gave the United States the watchword was duped by self-seekers, but only a few rabid radicals question his sincerity or the sincerity of the nation that followed him. War shows the dreadful extremity to which men are willing to go to

carry out convictions which seem to them sound. The conscientious objector is a figure for whom I have the profoundest respect. When war is finally gone it will be seen that the conscientious objector was one of the effective agencies in killing war. My respect for the conscientious objector, nevertheless, does not change my recognition of the fact that at the best he seemed to the plain man to be anxious above all not to sin against his own sense of right, no matter what might happen to other people. "I am not going to live with the hell of a reproving conscience," said the objector. "I'll go to hell rather than to see an evil purpose carried out by force of arms," replied the plain man. "Let right be followed though the heavens fall," said the conscientious objector. "A course which brings down the heavens is not right," said the plain man. The watchwords of war bear witness to the sincerity of the people—the masses of the people—that wage them. The pessimist comes back at us with the question as to what difference it makes whether we call the impulse of the people wicked or insane or mistaken so long as it leads to war. Conceding that we cannot bring charges of wickedness or insanity against whole peoples, what difference does it make if they can be so duped as to kill

one another at the rate of ten million in four years? Fools are practically as dangerous as insane men.

We are not willing to call the mass of the people of any nation fools. A whole nation may be mistaken. What cures the nations of mistakes is publicity. If it is admitted that those who have control of the sources of public opinion control the powers of peace and war, what is to hinder the honest and unselfish use of the news sources? If there can be no doubt that propaganda for war comes out of the skillful manipulation of news, why cannot there be devised some way of getting at news which is not manipulated? Who in his right mind can say that, if war comes out of propaganda, the people themselves cannot find ways of getting at the facts as they are. We do not underestimate the difficulties in the way of the people's getting at the facts. Some newspapers frankly represent financial interests, and their reports are colored by those interests. Some have nationalistic bias of a strong kind, and such tendencies reflect themselves in the news. Moreover, reporters who can actually see things as they are, and report them as they are, are rare. Grant all this and a thousand-fold more. If war comes out of propaganda, peace can come out of propaganda. If war

follows uttering lies, or mistakes, peace can come from telling the truth. Public opinion is the force behind both war and peace. If public opinion can be controlled in one direction, it can be controlled in another. It ought always to be controlled in the interests of the truth. We doubt if the telling of the truth will ever lead to war, if the whole truth is told. The telling of the whole truth about the peoples between whom there is likely to be war implies telling of the people as they are, and that means some sympathetic treatment of their points of view. If a nation deliberately determines to cultivate an international mind, such a mind can be cultivated, and that successfully. Within the limits set by the physical world in which we live, and the limits set by the nature of mind itself, peoples can do about what they will to do. To say that the nations of the earth cannot do away with war, if war comes from the spread of misrepresentations and misunderstanding, is an aberration. If they cannot do that, they cannot do anything worth doing. We might as well give up all talk of social progress, for many propositions before mankind are inherently more difficult than this of getting at facts and telling the truth as to international contacts.

Another pessimist tells us that all this runs

on the surface. The propagandists for war could not get a start unless they were moving in harmony with deep natural necessities. They are the mouthpiece of these necessities. We may remark that a basic necessity which requires so much utterance, and such strained utterance, might not be uttered unless men set themselves to utter it. It might remain balked, and silent. Continuing with the argument, we find it to be an old acquaintance, long since in danger of getting antiquated—the survival of the fittest. Who survives in a struggle? The fittest to survive, the fitness consisting in the fitness to survive, not necessarily in any other kind of fitness. Gresham's law in currency, by which the debased coin drives out the good coin, has its analogue in society. Keeping close to the evolutionary struggle, however, when human beings fight—and the fight gets so all-inclusive as to pull the greater nations in, there is no interested by-stander to act as umpire or referee. There are no rules of the game. If the fighters start with fists, so to speak, they end with knives. If they start with blows at the face, they end with blows below the belt. If they start standing up in man-fashion, they end in brute fashion—down on the ground, biting and gouging, with the greatest bully and black-

guard as likely to win as the one who started as a gentleman. The survival of the fittest, nakedly stated, is not the doctrine of an optimist. In war it leads to the exaltation of the liar and the sneak. The noble and chivalrous die first, and the second-rate and vicious live. This as to the individuals in the fighting, and conceivably as to the nations as units. The tendency of modern war is straight downhill, or, rather, straight toward the pit. Of course, if two little nations are fighting, the big nations may hold them to some semblance of decency, but not so in a world war. Every nation fears that the other will adopt some deadly weapon, which is in its very conception an offense against the human ideal, and ends by adopting the same weapon so as "to beat the other nation to it." After a few months all nations alike are about on the same plane as to moral method. After the war it is found that neither fighter is destroyed outright. The nations may have changed places as to military or commercial supremacy. With hundreds of thousands of the best in each nation dead, the crippled fighters resume their careers—much braced and heartened by the experiences through which they have passed! As to ethical survivals, they are lost sight of long before the struggle is over. The idealism of

the nations responds first in the persons of the young men, who go out to fight as knights for a cause. They fight fairly, and the more fairly they fight the sooner they die. There is no necessary and inevitable optimism in an evolutionary struggle. The chief duty of man on earth seems to be to conquer the brute inheritance in himself. He does not conquer that inheritance by setting his brute inheritance to fighting his neighbor's brute inheritance. That is the way to increase the brute inheritance all around. It is possible for man to give the morally fittest a chance to survive. Here again the problem is not insoluble. Public opinion does not sanction the emphasis on brute force in private disputes. It can likewise make the survival of the appeal to brute force between nations an impossibility. Generations have lived without knowing any experience of war. If one generation can do this ten can.

Now the economic determinist takes the floor. The necessity for war is not biological in the sense that men must fight in response to a pugnacious instinct, but it is biological in the sense that nations must fight for food areas, and for supplies of raw material. The impulse to national expansion is a national hunger. The urge is the urge of the instinct of self-

preservation in this economic sense. There is not enough material in the world to go around and give each nation all it wants.

If this is the final putting of the argument it is not formidable. When two business competitors find that neither can kill the other off they divide territory, or they unite. Far off as we seem now from any world organization, such organization, at least for business ends, is not at all out of the question. It ought not to be an insuperably difficult undertaking to create a public sentiment that would prefer businesslike division of economic possibilities to war for material gain. The masses of the people seldom gain materially from war.

Last of all, we look at a more serious defense of war. Suppose we had a world organization into which all the nations had freely entered. Some peoples are more prolific than others. Suppose a world division of economic resources which might seem at the start just. With some peoples increasing faster than others, would not the prolific peoples be entitled to more territory or more raw materials? This drive of population is acute to-day. Witness Japan and her demand for more room. If all nations increased in population at the same rate, we might carry on the world-organization indefinitely. Can this be possible with Japan

increasing faster than the Manchurian parts of China, and with Germany increasing faster than France? The argument sounds formidable in its direct putting, but look at it closely. Emigration to the land of another people does not help much. Those who emigrate increase fast, probably faster than those who stay at home. The relief to those at home is not great. It is not as if a mass of the population moved out. Comparatively few go, and the increase is by birth after the new land is reached. The demand is more for raw materials for use at home. This is especially true with Japan, which has not densely populated Formosa or Manchuria. Germany does not—or did not—talk of using France for colonization purposes. It comes down mostly to struggle for markets and raw materials in the end: and here agreement is better than fighting. In any case, if we can get a public opinion absolutely set against war, even the problem presented by population presents no unconquerable difficulties. If the energy now turned toward the making of armaments could be turned toward the scientific conquest of the earth, enough food could be found to make the support of a larger world population comparatively easy. The rising standard of living the world over, the spread of the idea of the worth

of every soul born into the world, the conquest of errors which elevate unduly the birth-rate, and of that despair which breeds recklessly, would hold the population in check against the more serious dangers of pressure on world food-supply. In any event the problem is not hopeless. The divine forces are not necessarily doomed to work forever in a world of war.

XVIII

CAN CHRISTIANITY CONQUER RACIAL ANTIPATHIES?

THE downcast social student who may be brought to admit that it is conceivable that Christianity may make Christian the social and industrial order, and may humanize the contacts between nations, takes a last stand on the impossibility of doing away with inter-racial prejudices and hatreds. He points out that in the past the exploitation of the so-called lower races by the so-called higher races has been one almost unrelieved horror, that a higher race, so-called, will still seek to put the stamp of inferiority upon a less-favored race; that there is something in the "color-problem" that represents an unreachable, insoluble contradiction to the spirit of Christianity, that even in the relations of the Christians to the Jews the situation does not grow appreciably better with the passage of the years. Here is something—no one can tell just what—which puts limits to the progress of Christianity and declares that to these limits its victories may reach, and no farther. The plight is indeed

desperate if it is as bad as this sad-hearted pessimist makes out. For the peoples of color, so called, vastly outnumber the white Christians; and if Christianity fails here, the failure on the world-scale is complete. We have here a final test.

Let us not give up till we see where we are. We take first the improvement that is actually coming—now on the way—in the contacts of the so-called higher races with the so-called lower. We may assume I think, that the attempt of the nations to exterminate the lower peoples is over. It might be physically possible, in this precious day of poisonous gases, for the nations in possession of the latest word in perverted and destructive science to put the inferior peoples out of the way in such numbers as to make them negligible as social forces. Nobody proposes such a course. We are shocked at the suggestion, but it is not far back to the time when men were apparently bent on the outright destruction of some unfortunate peoples, though, of course, without deliberate avowal of murderous purpose. One of America's most popular military heroes is credited with the philanthropic observation that the best kind of Indian is a dead Indian. The conquest of America was attended with the virtual annihilation of a race. The native

population of the West Indian Islands, the islands that at first welcomed the coming of Columbus and his successors, was in a hand's stretch of time, historically speaking, literally wiped out. Professor Fite says that the moment when the native peoples stood on the shores of America gazing upon the newly arrived white men was one of the most pathetic in all history. Without deliberate statement of such purpose the white men were to wipe out the darker-skinned peoples. Similar slaughter has continued till quite recent times, as the destruction of entire villages in the Congo region by Leopold's slave hunters will testify. Still, the worst, we most earnestly trust, is over. Nobody to-day tries to excuse Leopold's savagery. Nobody is going to suggest that we destroy the peoples of color.

Nobody is likely to suggest that we enslave the peoples of color. It might be easier to exterminate them than to enslave them. There is still the scandal of compulsory labor in Africa, about which I do not have enough information to pass judgment. If Albert Schweitzer is right, that compulsory labor can be so handled as to be nothing but supplying to the natives some elements of social stability and physical protection which they must have, something can be said for it. Compulsory

labor is, however, weighted with unspeakably dangerous possibilities, but none beyond the reach of a Christianized international sentiment. The more urgent peril is that of economic exploitation. This presents its greatest perils, not in the relations to the backward races like the African. It is entirely possible for Christian nations to take over the commercial contacts with African peoples and conduct them with some due regard for the rights of the natives, until those races come to larger measure of political self-development. J. A. Hobson's suggestion here is in order, that the greater races see that races like the African be treated, first, with due regard for the broad human rights involved, the problem being treated as one affecting the whole world; second, that the trade with such peoples be conducted especially with the thought of the commercial and industrial good of the backward peoples in mind; third, that any remaining advantages go to the nation immediately responsible as possessing "mandatory" power over the backward race. Hobson's suggestion no doubt would appear scandalous to a certain stripe of diplomat and trader, but there is nothing which makes it inherently impossible of fulfillment.

The pressing danger comes through the

possibility of exploiting peoples who are not to be classed as inferior, notably the Chinese. Here is the greatest labor supply in the world, considered both as to quantity and to quality. When the industrial leaders of the Western nations look upon China they see not merely huge tracts of virgin mineral resources but they see also the immense possibilities in labor supply. The attempt will be to take advantage of low prices paid for labor in China, of the low standard of expectation as to conditions in industry, of the lack of labor laws, to put upon China an industrial system which will tie her up to capitalistic forces in foreign lands. Men speak of the coming of Western industrialism into China as if it were as inevitable as the movement of the tides. This may be true, but why is it inevitable that it should come without any of the safeguards we have in the Occident, fragile as those safeguards are? If China has to have Western industrialism, there is no reason why she may not also have collective bargaining, and labor legislation, and a growing standard of life. That this suggestion drives some American and European industrial magnates to fury is all the more argument for the value of the suggestion. We all know that employing and investing classes are not fit to tell the employed classes what is

good for them. We all know what would happen right here at home if the industrial leaders were not progressively curbed by public opinion. If an industry goes into China, it would be just as much a wrong to send it in without sending also the knowledge of the ways we have found to guard human rights in industry, faulty as those ways are, as it would be to send in factory machinery stripped of the safety appliances in use in America. Industry in the hands of leaders, subject to no check but their own sweet wills, speedily tends to become materializing, vulgarizing, and brutalizing, to borrow Matthew Arnold's characterization of Philistinism. If we are to send industry to China, let it be not of the Philistine brand, but of the type at least moving toward the Christian ideal. Who shall preach to the Chinese the safeguarding of human rights as against money-making rights? The Christian Church. Why not?

Granting now that we can guard the peoples of color against physical harm at the hands of the white peoples, and granting also that we can keep these peoples from industrial exploitation, we still hear that any thorough Christianization of these peoples is out of the question. There is a limit set by the constitution of such peoples to the depths to which Christianity can go.

This is the favorite comment of the soldier, the trader, the clerk in the diplomatic office, the globe-trotting tourist, and some scientific students. It is worthy of respect partly because it represents a view so widespread, and partly because it expresses an almost inevitable misunderstanding in a particular kind of mind as to what Christianity is.

Christianity is not a monopoly of the white races. It may not be destined to win its greatest successes in the spheres of the white races, but before it can succeed in seizing and holding the yellow races it must beget in the breast of the white man more racial modesty than he has now. Nobody could deny to the white race great practical effectiveness, though here it is hard to see how they can be called superior to the Chinese. The white man in the European and American types of civilization has been a rough instrument to clear the way, but in art and in religion he has not been manifestly and inherently the king of men. He might just as well get it out of his mind that his form of Christianity ought to sweep the world. When he gets that fundamental adjustment perhaps some things in the peoples of color will take on a different look. The problem is not as to how the West is going to fit Christianity to the East, but how the East

is going to adapt Christianity to itself. Or, put it in another way, how Christianity is going to utilize the East. The back-lying assumption that the Christianity of the West is to be the Christianity of the East is wholly gratuitous. The East will react against Christianity according to its own nature, and put its own nature upon Christianity. Christ dealt with persons according to the nature of the persons. It will always be so. The day of Eastern conquests for Christianity has not yet begun. The new stirrings of self-respect in India and China are the harbinger of a newer day. Christianity cannot be given as a favor or a bounty to a nation. The nation must "take," and take in its own way. It is impossible for any idea to be dropped as a seed into a soil and grow without ejecting from itself some of its original tissue and weaving into itself elements from the new national and racial soil. Socialism, for example, has, when introduced into a new country, always disappointed those who introduced it, because of the differences from the original it at once has begun to reveal. It will be so with Christianity. The more vitally it is seized by the East the more differences it will show from the Western forms. So that the forces which seem at first to mean that non-Christian peoples are rejecting Christianity

may be those that later will lead to the fullest appropriations of Christianity. There is nothing impossible, or even improbable in such an outcome. The conquest of China, or India, by Christianity would be no greater than the conquest of the barbarian tribes that rushed upon the down-falling Roman Empire. There is nothing as difficult in the conquest of the Orient by a religion in origin Oriental as in the conquest of the Occident by a religion in origin Oriental. Some riches of the West the East surely needs—notably Western science. Some riches of the East the West surely needs. There is no obstacle of an invincible kind against East and West developing Christianity each according to its own nature and meeting in common devotion to the Christian essentials. Difficult as is the problem of Christianizing the peoples of color, the task is not hopeless. The missionaries who look to the salvation of the “heathen” in such sense as to make them Presbyterians or Baptists or Methodists after the American pattern will be increasingly disappointed. Those who look to the making of Chinese Christians have already the assurance of victory, as they see the beginnings of a self-respecting and righteously self-assertive Chinese church.

We grant that some centers of the racial

problem we have not yet touched—those having to do with the apparently blind and unreasoning hatreds which obtain so often between peoples of different colors and of different social tradition. We cannot look even upon the deeper, subtler aspect of the problem as if it presented an absolute block to the Christian spirit. What men need the world over is self-respect. Is it beyond reason to look for the creation of genuine self-respect among all peoples? The next step is an appreciation of one another among the nations, an appreciation founded upon mutual respect.

Beyond all this, if we could all learn to “keep our place” in the right meaning of the word, the racial antipathies could be put in the way of ultimate extinction. How one type of conservative begins to take pleased notice when we say anything about teaching peoples and classes and persons to keep their place! For to this man keeping a place means keeping a place of inferiority. I do not mean any such idea—not place with the idea of higher and lower, or with the idea of social stratification, or of caste. I mean that peoples and groups may take racial and social peculiarities as something honorable and may develop these distinctive traits to the utmost, all groups regarding one another in mutual respect.

Does Christianity mean that at last there is to be just one race out of fusion by intermarriage of all races? We cannot believe that. The kingdom of heaven is so rich in its possibilities as to call for the preservation of all worthy racial types. It is only out of distinctiveness of function that we can build up a body of Christ. If we could replace the idea of higher and lower among peoples with the idea of the indispensableness of each and all, the enmities which come out of resentment of assumed superiority would disappear.

The world is big enough for all. Nations and races have a right to enough of the earth's surface to furnish a foothold to make their contribution to the total we call Christian civilization. The privacy of races, so to say, should be respected, for races should have privacy as well as individuals. Brotherhood does not call for indiscriminate mixing up and leveling down, though this is not to seek to make oppressive laws shutting off peoples from one another. Christianity has been advanced as some groups: the Pilgrim Fathers, for example, have taken themselves for the time being out of the main current of social movement. So it may be with races. Forcing them unnaturally together may end by forcing them apart. Each should be looked

upon as giving its indispensable part to the body of Christ, and each should have a right to insist that nothing distinctive to itself shall be lost. There should be spheres in which each is unique, as well as a sphere in which all can work together. Is this hopelessly inconceivable?

XIX

GOD AND IMMORTALITY

I HAVE put off till the last of this section the consideration of how the question of immortality is bound up with our thought of God. New light is thrown upon the most of the matters which we have been discussing if we can be hospitable toward immortality. In dealing both with the individual and with society the intellectual landscape changes at once if we discover that we are not shut up to the limitations of the present earthly life. I have no desire to be dogmatic, but it seems to me that almost as serious a limitation as we could possibly put upon God would be to accept some of the present-day doubts about immortality. If God is limited to the present life in dealing with men, we have cut deeply into his power; and if he limits himself to the present life, we have a God of doubtful moral character. The significance of human immortality for the character of God will appear, I trust, as we proceed.

It is somewhat surprising to discover the extent to which practical skepticism about

immortality prevails to-day. I say practical skepticism, for the doubt is not so much a theoretical formulation as a practical assumption. This is the only life we are sure of. Let us do our best here. We have no sound evidence of any other life.

Insofar as this attitude comes out of protest against the arguments which have been advanced for immortality it is easily to be understood. There are no satisfactory proofs of immortality. Human souls have all the marks of contingency upon them. In almost every case a pessimist can raise the question as to why the person is here. We might, or we might not, have been created. There does not seem to have been in the system of things as we see it any compelling reason for our being here. The honest—or professedly honest—critic of immortality says that he asks himself why he should be granted eternal life. He can find no reason for belief in the face of the fact that there are no positive proofs. What logic calls for immortality? There is no logical necessity. The old argument about the simplicity of the soul is as good, and as bad, as any. The soul is a simple, not a compound or a complex, substance. It therefore cannot be disintegrated as can compounds or complexes, and must go on. Is there, how-

ever, this inevitability about the immortality of simple substances? Who is authority for the notion that the simplicities are naturally immortal? Souls had a beginning. Why cannot they have an end? Moreover, animals must have simple souls also, for they understand and apparently think.

The spiritualists do not help us much. All the evidence from them makes us doubt not immortality but the desirability of immortality. If we accept the resurrection of Jesus, that does not prove that we shall rise from the dead. There is some difference between our souls and that of Jesus. In the hands of some the objections take on a positive form, the objections being especially to a personal immortality that through memory gathers up the past of the earthly experiences into the expanding life, that renews fellowships begun on earth, that knows the eternal self to be the same as the self which lived on earth. Some believers in God put the objection forward that such a personal immortality is grotesque, that it is selfish, that it is needless, that the highest moral appeal is to men to labor on at good works without any regard for what is to come after death. There is almost a tendency to self-righteousness among those who talk thus. They are the ones who follow moral gleams for their own

sake! They are the heroes who cheer in the face of death! Defiance of death is not living in the certainty that death does not end all, with the gaze fixed on bliss beyond; defiance of death is life in the certainty, or on the assumption, that death does end all. It is a challenge ringing out in a hopeless universe.

The notion of the superior moral worth of the denial of immortality, and of moral life in the face of that denial is curious. It will not do to maintain, as was once so commonly done, that doubt of immortality necessarily comes out of evil life. Pluck up a doubt, ran the old saying, and you will find a sin at its root. The claim that right living leads to religious certainty is fundamentally true, but not true in the sense that would make every doubter a sinner. The doubts about immortality are often worthy of most serious consideration because of the high character of the doubters. These sincere doubters, however, lead us into some strange thought-predicaments. According to some it is immoral to desire to live forever. The moral life here is to be valued as the supreme good, but to desire an opportunity to seek the supreme good forever is immoral! To live on for the truth in the face of a hostile universe is moral. To begin to see signs that, after all, the uni-

verse is not hostile to morality, and that there is a plan in the universe for the conquest of other spheres beyond the earthly, is immoral! We get into the same corners here as in the pursuit of the scientific spirit. Bertrand Russell has said that the scientific spirit shows itself in an utter willingness to accept scientific findings no matter what their effect on our own desires or interests or prospects may be. Which is very fine and just. Then Mr. Russell and others like him proceed on the virtual assumption that whatever is most upsetting to human desires and expectations must be most scientifically established; and that the supreme scientific delight is the acceptance of the disagreeable and ugly, and even revolting.

When a thinker does not accept a belief in God there is not much reason why we should expect him to believe in immortality. In the preceding paragraph we have had in mind some who do not believe in God at all. It is remarkable, however, to see how many who profess belief in a God, even the God of Christ, draw back from the acceptance of a belief in personal immortality. Sometimes they share the feeling mentioned above that life here without hope of immortality is more noble; sometimes they shrink from immortality because they cannot imaginatively picture the conditions of immor-

tality; sometimes they even wonder if immortality is itself desirable. I wish to suggest that if we cannot hold fast to the belief in personal immortality, we cannot hold fast to a God like Christ; that if we give up belief in personal immortality, we have at the best so seriously limited and circumscribed God as to shut him off from the distinctive Christian teaching about God. God ceases to be God. Let us assume that we have a God like unto Christ and that this God does not grant immortality to men. We cannot say that God does not grant immortality because personal life is limited to this earthly sphere and these bodily conditions. We do not know this to be the case. The brain does not secrete spiritual reality as the liver secretes bile. There is no necessary connection between brain and personal life. The most we can say is that the physical states and the states of consciousness do, as a matter-of-fact, run parallel, but the hardest physiological psychologists can discover no necessary connection. There is indeed something almost overwhelming to the imaginative type of thinking as we see how detailed the parallelism is. We find that memory is conditioned by a definite tract of the brain, that the rejuvenating and invigorating periods of mental refreshment

seem to be connected with the functioning of this or that set of glands, and we forthwith feel that the supports of immortality are falling. There is nothing, however, more significant in the detailed parallelism than in the general dependence of mind on body. Men discovered early that thinking has something to do with the brain, but the nature of the dependence is just as dark to-day as in the beginning. There is nothing in the connection to hinder the continuance of life in connection with some other organism, or with no organism.

Suppose we see where we are if there is no human immortality, and we try to think of God in terms of Christ. A generation is born, leaves its record, passes into total darkness. The next generation arrives, looks backward to the achievement of the preceding generation, peers forward a little, makes a few guesses, and passes out. No generation attains to full knowledge. The last generation comes, takes a final glance around, and passes. That is all. If there is no thread of personal continuity anywhere, all talk about absorption into the Infinite, becoming a part of God, is nonsense or worse. Let us try to forget all our fine speeches about pursuing the moral career on its own account and see where such a conception leaves God, assuming that we believe in

God at all. The doctrine leaves God nowhere. Such a procession of phantoms, tantalized by a splendid dream which can never come true, is the reverse of worthy for God. The longer the procession, the worse the moral situation. If there are other spiritual beings, can they shout for joy at such an army of ghosts? If God can make other spiritual beings, delivered from the bondage of the material, he can transfer men to the society of those beings. If God is not himself bound to a passing existence, he can lift men up into companionship with himself. The men who deny immortality, and yet who profess belief in God, have at bottom forgotten God; they have at least forgotten the implications of Christlikeness. In trying to save men to what they think of as the highest moral life they have condemned God to a lack of all morality whatsoever. Of course, if men do not believe in the God of Christ, the problem is of a different order, but we are speaking of professed Christians. A friend of mine, a devout Christian, but with a leaning toward the modern distrust of personal immortality, once said to me: "I have reached the stage of such devotion to God that I leave myself completely in his hands. If he wills that I shall be immortal, well and good! If he wills that my personal existence shall cease

with this earthly life, likewise well and good! I am entirely submissive to his will." This sounds better as a confession of personal trust than as a counsel of good sense and moral insight. It is as if a man should say: "I love my friend so dearly that I am not chiefly concerned as to whether I ever see him again or not." Such a remark as this cannot release God from obligation to the souls which he has created. The deeply moral insight is not so much concerned with its own moral state as with the state of the universe. Just as the practical assumption of an intelligible universe is, after all, a driving ideal with the scientist, so also the assumption of a moral universe is a driving ideal with any moralist who understands himself. The Christian is anxious to save God, that is to say, to have a God with whom saved men can come into fellowship. More important than that any particular person should reach immortality is the necessity of having a moral God always at the throne of the universe.

We are to believe that we live, move, and have our being in the God of Christ, a God who has begotten us not in sport, or gushing affection, but in moral love, a God who is responsible to us for creating us, a God to whom we have vast value, if the analogy of human

parenthood means anything. Our existence depends on the will of God. As long as he wills we shall live. If he should will so, we would cease to be. The will, however, must be construed in moral terms. God is under no obligation to explain to us just now, or to-morrow, or the next day, just why things are. Sometime, nevertheless, he must explain. This is no refinement of a technical legalism. It is a primary demand of our instinct for justice and fair-dealing.

This basing of all our existence in the will of God needs to be guarded. It does not permit the creation of a single soul out of whim, or the destruction of a soul out of arbitrary decree. Once created the soul has inalienable rights. Hence all schemes of theology that provide for summary schemes of eternal punishment, or extinction, or conditional immortality have to be handled with great caution. A soul cannot be allowed to perish till absolutely no other course is morally possible. Immortality is not to be conceived of as the privilege of a select few. Any vigorous moral sense would prefer extinction to living on in a universe where the overwhelming majority had passed into death without hope.

If we can believe in immortality, at one stroke our thought of God is immensely re-

lieved and expanded. A God shut up to dealing with persons on a merely earthly plane would be indeed a limited God. Take just the social implications of immortality. If this life is all the outlook for a social order that will mean the most, is not so bracing as if we are laying the foundations here for a veritable social organism to last forever, or if this is a training ground for experience in social living which shall go on forever. At least half the problem of human existence is in learning how to live with other human beings besides ourselves. The moralist who insists on humane living on its own account has this on his side, that it is those who have best learned the significance of human and moral values on their own account who can be trusted with the large opportunities of the skies. If there is social life beyond this, a new sky is above us. The larger achievements are yonder. The public opinion which is to be the final voice of God is yonder. We cannot understand in detail the mysteries of life any better than before, but we can wait more patiently.

III

**ARE THERE LIMITATIONS INHERENT
IN DIVINE PERSONALITY ITSELF?**

XX

SOME LIMITATIONS SAID TO BE INHERENT IN PERSONALITY

WE consider in the last main division of our theme some limitations said to be inherent in personality as such. When we speak of a personal God we mean self-consciousness and self-direction—a will out of which all that we think of as finite proceeds. The student who rejects personality in God will tell us that the human personality is the only form we know and that there are necessarily such limitations upon human personality that it is worthless as throwing light on the Divine Life. If we are to think of God as personal, we must carry up to him the limitations of personality in man.

It is odd to observe how hard it is to please the philosophers who charge theism with being anthropomorphic. Since the time of the Greeks it has been charged against men that they make God in their own image, that this is so inevitable that if oxen were to take to thinking about God, they would think of him as in the form of an ox. We cannot get away

from thinking of God in our own image. Then the instant some thinker comes who purposes to strip the idea of God of the anthropomorphic elements which limit God's consciousness to the human type, he forthwith learns that if we are to think of God as at all personal, we must put upon him the limits of human personality. It is, however, possible to think of a Divine Consciousness free from the limitations which we think of as characteristically human. In truth, thinkers have thus thought of God's personal life for thousands of years. The Scriptures give us a God without variableness or shadow of turning—a representation which virtually strips a fundamental human trait from the picture at once. Much teaching about God through the ages has been in figures of speech which were never intended to be taken literally. We may fairly say that since respectable philosophic thinking began, God has not been conceived of as necessarily under the limitations of human consciousness.

Still, the critic says, these limitations are part of human consciousness, and we cannot conceive mind existing apart from them. The first is the limitation to matter. We never see consciousness manifest itself except in connection with a body and especially a definite type of brain-substance. Why, then,

do we go on talking about unlimited intelligence when the only intelligence we know is thus dependent? There must be a body, a nervous system at a particular stage of development; the bodily condition must be such as to permit the brain to work; a slightest lesion in the brain will stop some forms of thinking, and may stop all; the dependence of mind on matter is being set before us daily as more and more minutely complex and intricate. The growth of a tumor, the pressure of a bit of skull, an accidental blow on the head, the contraction of an artery, the wasting of a filament of nerve tissue may derange the consciousness beyond hope of recovery. What is God's body? Where is his brain? How can we presume to talk of God as personal in one breath and in the next deny him a body, which is the only visible sign of personality we know?

We are forced to repeat what we said in the previous chapter, namely, that complex and intimate as the dependence of mind on body in human beings may be, there is nothing logically necessary in such connection. The most that can be said is that consciousness and brain are in human beings found together. The differences between them, however, are so great that it is impossible to make the brain the cause of thought in any strict sense. Brain

is a piece of material with only the unity which matter can have. In space the particles are outside of one another in mutual externality. Brain changes from day to day, possibly from hour to hour. It is in constant flow. Substance of the brain cannot provide the unity without which diversity can never be known, or the fixity without which change cannot be recognized. No strictly material agent can become conscious. The only unity there is in brain is the unity of the plan according to which the brain may move, or the unity stamped upon it by the mind which is not material. The critic asks us to turn our argument around and see if the creation of matter by mind is any more thinkable, on our premises, than the creation of mind by matter. We might reply that this is not the theme immediately before us, but we could say that it is much more conceivable that a finite self could be the organizing principle of a brain than that brain could create thought. We do not say this, however. We say that it is conceivable, not that finite selves create matter, but that a Divine Self, self-conscious and self-directing, can act in such fashion that its forces, when seized under the mental forms of space and time, appear as what we call matter. My own will counts as a conditioning

force in the changes which the Source of all Force makes in my brain, but I do not claim that men are creators in the sense in which customary usage employs the term.

What is matter? It is a form of activity on the part of Divine Force. The question as to whether the Divine Mind is dependent on matter or not loses its meaning if matter is just a form of divine activity. It would, then, mean merely to ask whether the Divine Mind must act in material fashion as a necessity of its own consciousness, which is altogether different from the question of the dependence of mind on matter as we have been discussing it. Since there is no necessary connection between matter and mind which makes it against reason to think of mind as superior to matter, we may legitimately hold to the freedom from material dependence on the part of the Divine Mind. Of course it is conceivable that God is such that his activities mutually condition one another, so that consciousness is bound up with the putting forth of force by the Divine Will, but we repeat that that is not the question before us.

The above criticism as to the dependence of the Divine Mind on matter sometimes takes another form, or, rather, leads on to another suggestion. The students of mind have more

and more told us that a fundamental quality of mind is the impulse to self-expression or self-realization in some objective way. The body itself is being thought of as more than just an instrument for receiving impressions and giving forth activities, and is becoming a medium of self-realization and self-expression. Must we not think of the universe, then, as the body of God? Is it not necessary to him as a means of self-expression and self-realization? Self-expression does not necessarily mean expression to others than oneself. If there were no other persons in the universe, God might be impelled to self-expression just for the sake of the expression itself.

This view has seemed quite objectionable to some thinkers, presumably because of fear of making God in any way subject to matter. There is with most theologians an eagerness to preserve God's character as pure spirit. There does not seem to me any objection to holding to the material universe as the expression of God's personal life, provided we do not thereby bring in an element of material necessity which cuts into the freedom of God. If what we mean when we say that the material universe is necessary to God's personality is that God must act out his thought into expression, I can see no harm. If we make the

universe such that it comes forth from God by the laws of a necessity outside of God, we are off the path which leads to God's freedom. If matter is the expression of God's free will, well and good. It may be necessary to him in the deep sense of being the outcome of an irresistible impulse to self-expression. We must be on guard, however, against the danger of making matter a self-existent necessity for God.

A second limitation urged against personality as such is that it is under the necessity of development. We dealt with this objection somewhat in our section on the limitations involved in the thought of the Creator's relation to the universe. Here we look at it a little more closely, since the limitation is urged as against personality itself. An English thinker has recently avowed that he cannot see why creative intelligence cannot be thought of as developing by what he calls creative evolution from the first beginnings of matter on up to what the Christian calls God. It was a mathematical specialist who made this pronouncement, but the argument is not as exact as mathematical reasoning is supposed to be. It is a fairly sound mathematical argument that you cannot get out of anything something that is not already there. To say that what

the Christian calls God is developed from primordial matter is to say that he was in primordial matter.

Substantially the same judgment must be passed upon any scheme of development which sweeps God within itself. If it is something outside of God, then God is not the fundamental reality; or, if there is more than one fundamental reality, then we must either abandon the quest for unity or search for a Somewhat deeper than God and the forces which condition him. If God is developing by the laws of his own nature, then the development is simply a making explicit what is already implicit. This would be true from whatever aspect we viewed God, even the moral aspect. Moral development in men takes the form of larger and larger moral strength coming from a source beyond men themselves. As men struggle on and upward they earn larger grants of strength from the Moral Power toward which they are moving. The language of devotion has always recognized this. We speak of "blessings," "uplifts," "reenforcements." In no case do we think of men as developing by their own might, except that the putting forth of moral effort is the condition on which the moral increase comes. If God is developing by law inherent in him-

self, and if he is self-sufficient, all that development would mean would be the drawing out of what was already within.

Let us raise again a question at which we have glanced once or twice before. Can we think of God as having voluntarily so limited himself that in dealing with the men whom he has created he has brought into force a condition which means change to himself? It certainly must make a difference to God whether men move morally up or down. If men move up, do they not bring to God something he did not have before? Granted that men cannot add to God's power or his wisdom, cannot they by their appreciation of God add something to his life that he might not otherwise have had? Can they not by failure to appreciate him take from him something that would have added to the fullness of his joy? Is this, however, what we mean by being subject to the laws of development? I can see nothing in this to take from the dignity of a God creating children in his own image and thereby putting them on a plane where they may or may not respond to him.

Looking at the moral aspect again, can we honor a God who has not won his moral character by struggle upward? Is not the man who has fought his way up against moral

obstacles entitled to more credit than a Being who is now and ever shall be morally what he has been always? We reply that it is not a matter of credit or honor merely. By this same token the man who has come out of the narrowest moral surroundings and made progress is entitled to more honor than the man who has lived a full moral life without such desperate encounters with evil. The question is as to a realized ideal. What the saint longs for is the realization of life like unto God's. The ones most entitled to an opinion on this matter are the great saints. In their contemplation the full perfection of God has been the goal of all striving. Where do we get the notion that God must struggle through imperfection toward the perfect to be the highest moral ideal? Is not a will activity forever at the full, always acting out the moral ideal, worthier still?

One further objection to the idea of God as personal comes out of the limitation of actual human knowledge and the difficulty of conceiving a method of knowing that would sweep all into one intuition. Human knowledge is not only partial, but in vital respects false. How can we conceive a knowledge that would be full-orbed and complete? If we do conceive such knowledge, do we not therefore take God

so far away from human ways of knowing as to make personality in him mean something altogether different from personality in us?

We have defined personality as self-consciousness and self-direction. Which is the essential in human knowledge, the limited and conditioned quality of men's knowing, or that timeless act of binding past and present together and that unifying act which brings unity into diversity? We admit that we must concede a double aspect in God's knowing. On the one side is the all-comprehensive view of things as they are—one whole in which everything has its place—that ineffable gaze on reality for which the mystics have longed. On the other side must be the power to see just as we do. In speaking of the divine knowledge as affected by free will we said that the peculiarity of before-and-after must make a difference to God. At least we can say this—that no matter what "before-and-after" means to that Mind which really founds time, he must know what before-and-after means to us. If it be objected that this double form of knowing introduces complexity into the divine knowing, we reply that the complexity is no more serious for the Divine Mind than for the human mind. We know some aspects of truth under the wider form in which

they have been taught us in the educational process, and we know how those truths affect the uneducated. A man may know the stars from the point of view of the astronomical heavens; and he may know at the same time how the stars appear to a child. There is no reason to think that God may not have a power of sympathetic appreciation of men's points of view at the same time that he sees those points of view in their relation to ultimate truth.

The higher the human intelligence seems to climb in the experience of the mystics, the greater the sense of freedom from limitation. I do not know who would have the hardihood to say that men ever can have the all-inclusive sweep of intuition which we think of as God's knowledge, but there are those who have had experiences suggestive of that knowledge—glimmerings of the vision of all things in God. We can hardly doubt that in the visions of the greater mystics, in spite of all the imagery in which the visions are often so crudely expressed, there is a measure of freedom from spatial and temporal limitations and a glimpse of the separate and diverse as finding true place in a unified system. At least the time measures to which we are accustomed seem to mean nothing. As to time measures there can

conceivably be possible to men an increasing grasp of larger and larger units. It is conceivable that a human intelligence in some other than the earthly state might use for ordinary time measures larger units than anyone can now handle, and use them with complete ease. Literally a thousand years then might be as one day now. This on the side of the quantitative. There might be also increasing approach to that knowledge which we speak of as timeless when we stand in the presence of a beauty or a truth or a goodness which seems to be above all time.

We are here in a realm where any suggestion is tentative. All that we are trying to say is that we do not see how the limitations of human intelligence can be looked on as the essence of intelligence itself, and we believe that men have experiences which in suggestiveness of freedom seem to hint of likeness to divine intelligence.

XXI

THE SO-CALLED TIGHTNESS OF PERSONALITY

ALLOWING that there is nothing inherently impossible in thinking of God as person, there has been alleged against such personal existence the objection of inadequacy because of what William James would call the tightness, or overtightness of personality, though I do not know that James himself urged this objection against the personality of God. In spite of all our modern speech about the expansiveness of the self there are many who urge that personality is not a large enough conception for God. If such objectors concede that God is personal, they do so in halting fashion, with the proviso that he is personal, "and more." Just what that "more" means we do not know. Nobody alleges that the Divine Personality is circumscribed as is a human self. If the "more" means more personality than we can conceive of, who can protest? If it means that there is some other principle greater than self-consciousness and self-direction we do protest that personal life is the highest form

of existence conceivable by us. To say "more" beyond personal existence is to say what to us has no meaning.

It would be a huge mistake, however, to try to dismiss the above objection to personal existence for God with any summary impatience. The objection is serious, though not quite in the above form. Religious, as well as philosophic thought, draws back from the idea of God as a lonely monad. It may sound almost whimsical to say so, but a large part of theological energy all through the ages has gone toward the search for suitable companionship for God. Men have tried to find some intellectual provision for an escape from the loneliness of an existence which seems solitary, solitary not in any absentee sense, but solitary in the uniqueness of an unshareable absoluteness of excellence.

Pantheism is such an attempt to modify the idea of the solitariness of separate personal existence. Pantheism seems somehow to bring God so much nearer! Nothing is gained, though, in getting God so near that he becomes responsible for moral evil. The theistic puttings of divine immanence do better in keeping God free from actually causing evil, but they do not, as they stand, provide for full social life in God. Such social life would require

objects to which, or to whom, God could give himself unreservedly, without any limitation. There seems to be among church thinkers about God a haunting query as to whether men wholly provide such objects. This is no reflection on the love of God; but the finitude of men, taken singly or in the mass, is so great that, with all his potentialities, man is questioned as to his suitability to be the sole or fully adequate object of the divine companionship. This point is usually met by the insistence upon the unlimited improvability of man. Assuming an immortal existence for man, what is to hinder his approach almost to God? Nothing; but this argument rests on the assumption that time means nothing for God. We shall have to rid ourselves of that assumption. Taking the earth just as it stands, it appears to have existed millions upon millions of years before man came. These millions of years may indeed be to God as a watch in the night, but they are a sign of man's finitude, a mark of the distance between man and God. Take any created and finite beings anywhere. Let the worlds conceivably be filled with spirits. We can think of a time when they were not, if they are finite, and thus at last we come to the isolated monad, or the lonely God, whichever we prefer. All

of this seems farfetched to some minds, but considerations like these have been serious enough all through the ages to lead some earnest thinkers to deny personality to God altogether. If God is God, there can be no other like him, it is declared; and if there can be no other like him, full companionship, and hence full social life, is for him out of the question.

It is interesting to note that religions outside of Christianity have been confronted with the same problem in thinking of their gods. They have not shrunk from providing for companionship in the circle of their divinities. The Greek gods seemed to have a social existence on Olympus. The Egyptian and Babylonian gods were, some of them, in close relation to one another.

By the way, it may be permissible to digress long enough to express honor to the ancient Jews for not yielding to the demand for the social in God, when to have yielded to that demand would in all likelihood have led to the introduction of a feminine principle into the Divine Life. The feminine principle was powerful enough in the life of the gods of the ancient peoples. It may have originally been introduced with a natural and innocent recognition of a phase of the pro-creative and re-creative force in nature. The inevitable tendency,

however, of the introduction of the feminine principle as feminine into the object of divine worship, and of a masculine principle emphasized as masculine, is downward. It appears that one reason why the Israelites could think of the Canaanites as fit subjects for extermination was the licentiousness of their religious rites. From all this the Jews were free except possibly at outposts in heathen lands, so far as their thought of God was concerned. They fell away into calf worship at times, and the ceremonies on the high places time and again degenerated into orgies, but they did not really introduce the sex idea into their thought of God. For that deliverance we can always be grateful.

The influence of the Jews was so strong in this respect that when the Christian theologians began to formulate the doctrine of the social God they still kept the sex idea out. While there is no reason to think that the sex principle is fundamental to personal existence, full moral life being conceivable to souls as souls without thought of sex, it would be but natural to think of the sex-principle as playing a part even in divine relationships. There has indeed been an exaltation of the Virgin Mary, by Roman Catholics, so extreme as almost to make the Virgin equal to God. Here,

however, the aim has been to provide for mercy and compassion near a throne conceived of as harsh and stern.

Our aim is merely to show that the church has taken seriously the problem of a social life for God. I am not seeking so much to suggest a doctrine that will make provision for a social personality in the Divine as to indicate that the difficulty has not been slighted by the church thinkers. Long before we heard of the "overtightness of personality" theology was at work on the problem. The recognized task has been not only to conceive God as an Individual, but also as a *socius*, to use the horribly pedantic word the sociologists have employed to express a social unity. This aim has in part been a moving force in shaping the specific doctrine of the Trinity, though the more forceful consideration here has been the provision for a place in the God-life for Christ. With this latter consideration I am not here primarily concerned.

Let us glance at some statements of the doctrine of the Trinity just to see how seriously the church has taken the difficulty of a solitary God shut within isolating personal limits. It is not good theological form to-day to say much about the Trinity, but a belief which has back of it a history of nineteen centuries must have

enormous vitality. Belief in anything which can last that long is no small intellectual phenomenon, but an astounding fact calling for explanation.

From the point of view of making a social foundation for the Divine Life the church has expected the doctrine of the Trinity to move between the Scylla of three independent Gods on the one side, and the Charybdis of trinity as merely diverse manifestations of God on the other. The question has further seemed to be not as to whether God can get satisfactory impersonal objects of his regard, but satisfactory personal objects as well. The criticism of impersonalism has been urged against all theories of the Trinity like that of Hegelianism with its thesis, antithesis, and synthesis. Hegelianism, with its emphasis on thought rather than a thinker, hardly makes provision for a personal God at all.

In dealing with this struggle for an adequate object of God's thought and social regard the early church Fathers delved pretty far down into the depths, even though their formulations seem strange to us now. We all know how much use they made of the essentially Greek doctrine of the *Logos*. The advance which the Fathers made in dealing with this Greek idea was in calling the *Logos* the Son, though

it is doubtful whether these thinkers used the word "person" in anything like the modern sense. They made the Son the Eternal Object of the Father's justice and love, and thus laid, as they believed, the basis for a social life in the Godhead itself. To mark the Son off from finite creature-hood they used the term "the eternal generation of the Son." I once heard an amateur theologian say with jaunty finality, "This expression means nothing to me." To which the fitting rejoinder might have been, "Don't you wish it did?" It is easy and cheap to sneer at thinkers like Origen, but the thinkers of Origen's time knew exactly what they were about, imperfect as their conclusions seem to us now. They saw that to make the provision in the Divine Life that would fully meet the demand they had to make the Son more than a contingent creature of the Father's will. So they spoke of eternal generation to use a phrase which would guard against making the Son a finite creature.

Out of fashion as much of the phraseology is, the central position in all this is capable of being philosophically defended, or, rather, it cannot be ruled out philosophically as self-contradictory. By the law of thinking itself we have subject and object. Some mystics, indeed, have talked of a vision in which subject

and object would be merged, but they always make provision for a subject who is to be conscious of the merging. Now, the Divine Subject must have a Divine Object. The church Fathers, under the influence of Greek thought, conceived of the *Logos* as expressing the highest and best of God's thought. It was conceived of as the Object which expressed God to the utmost—God thought himself all out, so to speak, in the *Logos*. Nothing remained but to conceive of the *Logos* as in some sense personal in order to make the Son the Eternal Object of the Father's regard, and thus the foundation for a social life at the heart of the universe was laid. This theory escaped the charge of tri-theism by grounding the existence of the Son in the necessary activity of the Father. There are not two Gods but one God, the Father, expressing himself completely in the Son.

If we think ourselves back into the atmosphere in which this conception took shape, we must regard it with respect. It was, for its day, one of the high achievements of the philosophic mind. Those who sneer at it are devoid both of historic and theological perspective. Still, the theory itself does not give us the Christian Trinity. Subject and Object we can know, but a third Somewhat, moving between

them, is not so clear. William Newton Clarke speaks indeed of God's necessary existence as a "triunity"—Father and Son and the Spirit binding Father and Son together, but the exposition while verbally clear, is not convincing.

Borden P. Bowne, to whom Methodism owes so much, used to hold fast to a metaphysical basis for richness and fullness of social life in God. He used to say that we could have a legitimate pantheism as applied to God himself. If we can have God, by fundamental necessity of his nature, reproducing himself in Objects who are nevertheless not finite as separate individual creations; and if these Objects are the necessary outgoings of God, we have pantheism applied to the inner life of God. Modern pantheism thinks of God as in all things, even in the limited human will with all its faults. If we lift pantheism up to God himself and provide for full goings-forth from him as complete as himself, we have a social basis. Love and good will would rule as the necessity of God's life. There is nothing inherently self-contradictory in this. If the believer next wished to say that the Son and Spirit were such emanations from the Divine Nature—eternal goings-forth from God—there would be no logical objection, though nothing

in the doctrine itself hints as to why there should be trinity rather than more or less than trinity.

My aim in entering this highly speculative realm has not been to prove the Christian doctrine of the Trinity. That rests on other than a speculative basis. I am simply pointing to a direction in which profound thinkers have thought. There is no inherent logical necessity which shuts God tightly within himself. I must admit, however, all the difficulties that appear along the path of such reasonings as I have tried to summarize here. The most telling objection is that there is something of presumption in trying thus to think into the inner constitution of the Divine Life. Was it not Gregory of Nyssa who said that it was strange that men would assume to know so much about the constitution of God when they admittedly do not understand the constitution of an ant? The objection, however, is not as final as it sounds, even if it did come from Gregory of Nyssa. We do not know much about the constitution of an ant, but we know that personal life requires certain conditions among ourselves for its moral fulfillment. Theologians are not necessarily trying to deduce anything concerning God from a merely formal logic. They are taking personal

life at the highest and best we know and are trying to make it at least a tentative line of approach to relief from some objections raised against a personal God. Scores of non-Christian thinkers seem to find no difficulty of a philosophic order in pantheism as applied to nature and man. The difficulties are moral, as we see when we begin to look for a standard of truth and right once we make men, as they are, parts or phases of God himself. If it is possible, however, for the non-Christian to conceive of God pantheistically as related to man and nature, he ought not to declare it impossible to conceive of a higher pantheism as applied to God himself, in which God expresses himself so fully that his expressions become phases of himself, in a sense that finite free wills are not.

I have in other books discussed various phases of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity. All I seek here to show is that the problem is a real and serious one, at which the church has been laboring for centuries, and that a solution is not necessarily impossible. The objection that the reasoning of the church so far has been based upon intellectual presumption is not final, though such objection is weighty. It would be presumption indeed to say that the church has arrived at a satisfactory solu-

tion, but the fact that the suggestion of Christianity may be faulty does not prove that there is no solution. It may encourage hope that there is a better solution.

Metaphysical expositions to one side, however, if we can believe in a God of full personal life, we can believe also that he can find a way, or that he inherently has a way, of meeting the requirements of such life. Many Christians hold that men, with all their finitude, are adequate objects of the Divine Life, but there is nothing to forbid others from a search for still worthier objects. There is no inherent contradiction in the thought of Divine Personality itself which would forever preclude God from adequate objects for justice and love and fellowship. The absence of such contradiction is all we are concerned to show. There is no reason why the tightness of human personality should mark the Divine Personality.

XXII

IS THE PATH TO INCARNATION CLOSED?

ALONG with the highest exaltation of Jesus to-day there goes much of the completest unwillingness to think of him as in any unique sense the Incarnation of the Divine. Asked if the objection to incarnation is founded on the character of Jesus, the critic will freely reply that if any man is to be thought of as divine, Jesus is that man. Only few have been able to offer any suggestion as to how to make the character of Jesus more godlike, and the suggestions have not supplied any great contribution to religious thought. The important objections have to do with the thought of God. It is inconceivable that God should become man. No matter how deep the love of God for his children there are some gulfs that he cannot cross. In the nature of personality an incarnation, in any but a figurative sense, is out of the range of possibility. We do not, indeed, understand much about the inner secrets of personal existence, the limits within which it must move, but we do know enough

to see that all talk of God's becoming man must be cast out from strict thinking. So speaks the critic.

It is true that the church has at times done some crude work in the exposition of the incarnation. Ordinary thought conceives at once of human analogies and tries to make these set forth the coming of the Divine Son from heaven to earth. A favorite illustration is of a king leaving his palace and assuming the garb of a peasant that he might better understand peasant conditions. This is well and good from the point of view of popular pictorial presentation, but it, of course, does not meet any of the theological difficulties which make the incarnation so much of a stumbling-block to philosophic minds.

Again, many of the great creedal statements of the church have been taken as if they were solutions rather than as puttings of the problem. For example, when a creed states that Christ is very God of very God, and at the same time teaches that he is very man of very man, what we have is not a solution of our problem but the utterance of a demand. The church has said that the divinity and humanity of Christ must both be preserved. The creed does not block inquiry but does set a problem to be solved. It may be that there is no solu-

tion that will fully meet the demand. In any event, the creed itself is not the solution.

It is generally agreed upon to-day that the problem of the incarnation must be approached from the point of view of the consciousness and character of Jesus as set before us in the New Testament. So the first question becomes, What do we know about Jesus? The historical critics make it clear—or try to—that we do not know much. Now, with all due respect to the critics and with all due honor to the immense results they have achieved, we must remember that in many, many instances they find in Jesus just what they set out to find. If the critic is of the Albert Schweitzer school, he finds that all that Jesus said has to do with apocalyptic. Everything else is explained away. If the critic is inclined toward the exaltation of the proletariat, he declares that what Jesus said was, “Blessed are the poor.” If he is more socially conservative he avows that Jesus said, “Blessed are the poor in spirit.” If the critic is pacifist, he rules out the cleansing of the Temple and softens down the invective about whited sepulchers full of dead men’s bones. If the critic is more strenuous, he talks not of peace but a sword. In short, no character in the field of human study has been approached less

objectively, with less freedom from bias than has Jesus. When all is said, however, there is before us a unique Personality whom most critics concede to be unimpeachably lofty. I do not think it exaggeration to say that most critics at all friendly to Jesus concede that they could think of no better God than a God like unto Christ.

The problem is to account for this spiritual phenomenon. The mere reciter of the creeds—I refer to the man who repeats the phrases without asking what they mean—says that Jesus was both God and man, two natures joined together, Jesus speaking now out of divine consciousness and now out of human consciousness. To this the fatal objection is that the account in the Gospels does not suggest such double consciousness. We have there a human consciousness uttering divine truths, but uttering them in human fashion after seizure by a human mind. Moreover, it is hardly conceivable that two natures could be put together without having each modify the other. When two physical atoms are put together each modifies the other. Judging by all the analogies we possess, the union of human and Divine would make a difference to both.

Starting from the facts of the Christ-life as

we can best get at them, some have seen in Christ man's climb to God. A man named Jesus was from birth so obedient to the divine will that he came increasingly to know the things of God. His own word was that by doing the will of God men come to know God. If we can get a will perfectly responsive to the divine will, there is literally no limit to what that will may seize of knowledge of the Divine, and, through that knowledge, of control of divine forces. Jesus epitomizes for us the future experience of the race. It is said, or used to be said, that the human embryo in a few brief months recapitulates the physical history of life through ages, the embryo running swiftly through stages of development that it took organisms developing toward man millions of years to traverse. Reversing the process in our figure of speech, Jesus in a few brief years gathered up within himself the best that was to come to the race of men. By that law of election which is one of the inscrutable mysteries Jesus was given the happy lot of showing how far man could climb toward God under human conditions. It was manifestly impossible for Jesus to attain to all the knowledge of God under human limitations, for it is manifestly impossible for a human being to be omniscient. So far as knowledge

of God could be seized by a man Jesus seized that knowledge. So far as it was possible to show what God himself would do if he were a man, Jesus made that revelation. In the spiritual sense, the only sense that counts, according to this exposition, Jesus was God. He had identified himself so closely with God that, morally speaking, he and God were one.

It will be understood, I trust, that all I am trying to do is to show that God is not so limited that he cannot reveal himself in incarnation before men. I am not trying to pass on the worth of these various suggestions of theorizers about incarnation. I am not concerned that the reader know which theory I personally prefer. All I seek is to show that various answers can be made to the criticism that God is so limited that he cannot reveal himself by incarnation.

It seems to me that by the above path men can find God in Christ. I think such a theory can preserve the spiritual values of the incarnation. Still, there are powerful thinkers who maintain that this statement, consistent though it may be in itself, is inadequate. Having seen how far we can go in this path, and having failed of entire satisfaction, suppose we start from the other end, the divine side. Let us do so because we find in the consciousness of

Jesus as set before us in the New Testament an element that the theory of ascent toward divinity, as stated above, overlooks—the freedom not only from contrition or penitence, but the freedom from any sense of humility as we conceive of humility. There is on the other hand a claim to moral superiority which does not fit in with human saintliness, a claim which would be resented if put forward by a human saint. The consciousness of Jesus was human indeed in its processes of seizing truth, but it was more than human in its impression of moral supremacy.

Starting from this element of the consciousness of Jesus a school of religious teachers tell us that our theories must start from the divine side. In Jesus God becomes man. Men like the late Dr. Fairbairn teach that the divine attributes are of two kinds—metaphysical and ethical. Metaphysical—omnipotence, omnipresence, omniscience—are secondary to ethical—holiness and love. The metaphysical might conceivably be set aside for a time or submerged, that under the limitations of humanity the ethical might be revealed. The consciousness of Jesus did not suggest omnipotence, omniscience, or omnipresence. It did suggest divine holiness and love. May we not believe, then, that Jesus is God become

man—holy love revealing itself under the human limitations of space and time?

The Kenoticists, so-called because the theory is one of a divine self-emptying, have a confessedly hard time in making their theory work. Men admittedly experience strippings of power of mind. Through weakness or illness they know that their funds of knowledge are for a time taken away from them. The loss of memory is often so complete that men hardly recall their own names. If this clue seems rather unworthy as applied to the Divine Mind, the reply is that we can say, as did the late Dr. Briggs, that the attention of a mind can be so focused on one point that the circle of consciousness shrinks toward that central focusing. Still, this is so human an experience that we have difficulty in thinking of it as throwing light on the processes of the Divine Mind, unless, of course, we call in the old principle of the subordination of the Son to the Father. This makes the theory consistent enough logically, but assumes an almost incredibly immense knowledge on our part of the inner constitution of the Divine. We have here again the difficulty we spoke of in connection with differences in personal distinctions in the Trinity—the theory is logically consistent, but it reaches so far beyond what we have

data for that many reject it for its apparent intellectual presumption. On the other hand, many Christian thinkers hold fast to this idea in one form or another. If it can be accepted it makes almost literal the statement that God becomes man. It is entitled to respect because of the character of the men who have held to it, and because of the intellectual daring required to believe it. With many this daring will commend the theory. Bowne called this theory—which he in substance accepted—the sublime logic of Christianity. Others think of it as overbold and unwarranted and pronounce it mythology. Logic here will not settle the problem. Thinkers will decide on the basis of presuppositions and temperaments.

A third group of Christians think of Christ somewhat as follows: we have in Christ not a separate individuality as with men. We have a human life—mind, feeling, will, and all other mental powers—constituted as the vehicle by which God is to reveal himself, the constitution being of a unique sort that from the beginning kept the Christ-life superior to the moral evil of human nature, and gave to the mind the balance which marks the mind of God, to the heart the feeling which is from on high, to the will the immediate responsive-

ness to the Divine Will. If we may say so, the theory insists that the human nature of the Christ was constitutionally such as would be God's nature if God could outright live under human conditions. If God could grow, this is how he would grow. If he could pass through the experiences of humanity, this is how he would pass through the experiences. The thought, feeling, and deed of Jesus are God's. The theory does not mean that the human side of the Christ-life is suppressed: it means that the human nature runs parallel to the divine nature and interprets the divine nature into human terms, and that it shows not merely the content of the divine nature, but the constitution, the proportions, so to speak, of the Divine Father put into human terms. The theory covers up a good deal of mystery under such words as "peculiar" and "unique," but its aim is clear. It conceives of the humanity of Christ not as a separate individual human being, but as a divinely caused organ of revelation bound to the Divine by special organic connection as the medium of the revelation of God's character at the full. If the theorists are asked why they use such words as "unique" and "peculiar" and "special," they reply that the life of Jesus as set forth in the records is the basis, that the con-

sciousness of Jesus was unique and special and peculiar, and that the theory takes account of the facts. If they are asked if the setting forth of divinity under the ideas of a particular time is possible without impairing the divinity, they reply that the miracle has been wrought. Under all the human limitations the divine has been set forth. The holders of this view have to admit that the human nature of Christ was not fashioned in the same way as ordinary human nature in that the course of heredity and ancestral tendency was not allowed to make upon it any soiling or unbalancing effect. This is probably what the church has been trying to say through the dogma of the virgin birth. A revealer of God must needs be without sin, for only the pure can see God, to say nothing of revealing him. The problem, however, is more than that of purity; it is that of poise, of balance, of proportion. There must be in the revealer of the divine relief from that partiality of view which marks the distinctively human. This full-orbedness of moral quality appears in the life of Jesus, and the theorist maintains that his Christology takes at least formal notice of it and makes formal provision for it.

We come now to the most numerous class of Christians, those who do not have a theory.

They are not intellectually inert, but they do not find satisfaction in the formal utterances of theology. They insist that in Christ they find God, and, finding God in Christ, they will have it that in some true and vital fashion God is in Christ. Taking Christ as their leader, they accept his teaching that the path to knowledge of the Divine is through obedience to the Divine, and, following Christ, they feel that the divine is come upon them. They object to the theories not because they seem to say too much, but because they seem to say too little, too little at least as compared to the Christ-life which they find in themselves.

The testimony of such lives is more important than any theories. If the intellectualist will have it that there cannot be incarnation unless we can have a satisfactory intellectual statement of incarnation, we point to the Christologies and say that we can believe that among them they probably contain the rudiments of a theory, and that in any case the theory of the incarnation can be expected to lag behind the facts, for life is more than intellectual statement about life. The intellectualist has not proved incarnation illogical, to say nothing of unthinkable. For multitudes do think it, and, thinking it and believing it, they feel that they find God.

The critic replies that the illusion that God can be found has been common since men began to think at all, that if men believe honestly that they have found a good God, certain good results will flow into their lives even if there is no basis for the belief in fact. We admit the force of illusion in human life. We admit that force in Christian experience. We admit that the experiences of the mystics in visions have an element which must be mere accommodation to human modes of thinking. When Isaiah, for example, saw God high and lifted up, we are not necessarily to believe that he actually and literally saw a spatial God. Still, when we take the total effect into account, we believe that Isaiah "saw" God. In all religious thinking and experience there is the mark of the limited and relative. We can admit this and yet refuse to believe that the experience of the church through nineteen centuries in finding God in Christ is illusion. The trouble with illusions is that they sooner or later are found out. The relative in the various interpretations of the Christ we admit, but after all the critical castings-forth of the relative, a source of power remains that seems to be of God. If it has the practical effect of God through so long a time and through such fires of criticism, we hold fast to the

belief that the path to incarnation is not blocked.

All this criticism of the possibility of incarnation seems at times curiously unreal. If we believe at all in a holy God, how can we believe that he could have created us and sent us forth into a world like this unless he is himself able to reach us? Since the most effective way to reach us is through human life, can we think that he would have sent us here if he could not through a life have made revelation of himself in such fashion that we can call that life the incarnation of himself? This sounds like dogmatism, but I am merely asking questions. As a matter of personal opinion it does not seem to me reasonable to believe that a God in full possession of himself and the author of human life, could not make a supreme revelation of himself through a human life if holy love called for such a revelation.

XXIII

THE WEALTH OF THE DIVINE FEELING

THE scriptural revelation has for one of its distinguishing marks the emphasis on God as a Being of feeling. The Old Testament made God subject to almost all the feelings which surge through a human heart, even including anger and jealousy. The New Testament comes to its climax in the cross of Christ and in the interpretation of that Cross as laying bare the inmost center of divine grief and sorrow.

Almost from the beginnings of Christian theology, however, or as soon as theology began to come under the influence of Greek thought, the theologians began to shrink from maintaining that God can suffer. They laid stress on the impassibility of God. It is not a worthy conception of God that brings him within the reach of pain. How can we think of a God who can be pained, as the Infinite? The most limiting experience that we know is pain. If pain reaches to the center of the universe, we have seriously limited God.

I think a sound Christian consciousness would insist that if pain does not reach to God, God is limited. We may say all we please about the ideal person's living in a state of ineffable bliss. Pain is a sign of lack of harmony, and at the center all must be harmony. We must not, however, sacrifice too much to secure painless harmony.

If God cannot know pain, he is limited in his own personal being. In the only personal existence of which we have experience feeling is, at the last analysis, the realm in which our values are realized. Even the values of pure thought are realized in the emotional glow which comes out of a deep insight. The values of achievement mean most to us by gratifying feelings of various intensities. It is no longer possible to hold to the sharpness of the division of personal faculties into intellect, feeling and will for the personal life is one and indivisible and each of the powers is involved in the others. We cannot unravel the personal strands and leave just mind and will. If God does not have feeling, he does not have personal existence in any sense intelligible to us. We have all along tried to guard against anything like a curious prying into the mysteries of the divine nature. We have admitted an unwillingness to dogmatize about notions of the

Trinity and of Christology because of our own lack of knowledge of the inner nature of God. To go so far, however, as to avow that God cannot feel is to disallow to him an essential element of personal being.

The critic might reply that he is not denying feeling to God, but the feeling of pain. That would leave us worse off still. If God can feel and yet does not feel pain for the sufferings of the children whom he has called into the world, we have a moral lack in him which makes him unworthy. The highest peak of the teaching of Jesus about the Fatherhood of God is the parable of the prodigal son. If anyone should try to interpret that parable so as to leave out all implication of pain for the father, the interpretation would be rejected at once by any normal Christian mind. The joy that would put the best robe on the returning prodigal is by its height an index of the sorrow into which the loss of the son had previously plunged the father.

The tendency of Christian thinking is more and more moving back toward finding the center of the Christian revelation in the cross of Christ, and toward making the suffering revealed there a revelation of the sorrow of God. In the chapter on incarnation we might have said what we can better say here, namely,

that without any glorifying of sorrow for sorrow's own sake, the statements of incarnation that make the incarnation mean most for God are those that make the incarnation mean most for man. I have nothing but feelings of regard for hosts of acquaintances who sometimes ask me if God could not make a revelation of himself through Jesus if we conceive Jesus just as a prophet, or a teacher, a man altogether like other men except in his moral excellence. I reply that no doubt God could make such a revelation, but I confess my own psychological peculiarity in that the more Christ means to God the more he means to me, and I feel that my peculiarity in this respect comes out of a sound religious instinct. If Jesus was a prophet, he died as a martyr to the truth. Other men—hosts of them—have died as martyrs to the truth, but their martyrdoms do not mean for men what the martyrdom of Christ does. Even the men who revolt most against traditional statements of atonement feel that in the life and death of Jesus, God has somehow "made cost to himself," to use Horace Bushnell's phrase. They feel that somehow the relation of Christ to God is such that the cross of Christ is a hint of the sufferings of God himself. We have got far, far beyond the theory that God allows Christ to

suffer just as a substitute for himself. We teach now that the suffering of Christ is a revelation of the quality and extent of the Father's sorrow. Christ is not seeking to appease God: he is seeking to reveal God. A God who cannot suffer with and for men is below the level of thousands of men who willingly suffer for causes and persons. The mother who goes down into the valley of death to bring a child into the world is more heroic than a God honored for "impassibility." If the Absolute must be impassible, better do away with the term "absolute" and get some other.

We are not likely to find better interpretation of the cross of Christ than that of Paul: "He that spared not his own Son." The context is not that of a God of anger, but of love, and of sorrowing love. Read the classic passage in Philippians, about Christ's emptying himself. The expression is apparently struck out in the heat of a passionate appeal, and it may not stand scrutiny as exact philosophic statement, but it shows not merely the spirit of Jesus but the spirit of God. It was for this self-emptying that God glorified Jesus.

There is no way for God to escape sorrow if he is a God of love. We must repeat that we are not trying to glorify suffering on its

own account, but we are trying to preserve the moral fullness of the Divine Life. Sorrow may be not an index of weakness or of limitation but of strength and outreach of moral understanding. I remember an experience years ago when I was trying to enforce a suggestion elaborated by Dr. R. C. Moberly in *Atonement and Personality*—the idea that it is only the person who has never sinned who can see sin as it is and grieve over it most intensely, that sinning is so devastating in its effect on the sensibilities that no matter how sincerely penitent a soul may be, the penitent cannot see sin with the same insight as the higher morality which has never sinned sees it. So I attempted to make clear to a group of readers that sin in a sense costs God more sorrow even than it costs the sinner. I shall not soon forget some of the outcry I caused, much of it based on the assumption that the idea of a suffering God is unthinkable, especially a God in any way suffering the consequences of men's sins.

I see no way of escaping Moberly's conclusion that the chief sufferer from men's sins is God himself, if we are to hold to the Christ-likeness of God. Religious thought to-day is not so deeply engrossed with the divinity of Christ as formerly. The preoccupation to-

day is with the divinity of God himself, using the word in the Christly sense. We ask not only as to whether Christ is like God but whether God is like Christ. If God is like Christ, then the suffering of the cross gives us a hint of the suffering of God. It will be understood that by cross we refer especially to the peculiarly intense spiritual agony which seemed to come to climax in Christ in the days of his passion. Quite likely the physical distress was a small concern compared to the inner sorrow which we can look at but cannot comprehend. By cross also I mean not just the one supreme event on Calvary but the cross which Jesus carried in his heart from the beginning.

We did not intend, however, to give an undue proportion of our space to thought of the suffering caused by sin. This is a world of pain caused by sin indeed, but much of the pain has, so far as we can see, no relation to sin. From the beginning pain has been in the world. The responsibility for pain which does not come out of moral evil must at last be charged to God himself. We repeat that our anxiety is in a measure to justify God to men. If we are to reconcile men to the God of pain, we must show that God does not ask men to undergo experiences which he is not, as far as

possible, willing to undergo himself. This does not mean that there would be any particular virtue in God's taking a share of suffering just because men suffer. Suffering is not a load like a physical weight to be divided. It does mean that men want to feel that their suffering means something at the center of the universe. It means that they crave at least to be understood through the understanding which comes out of sympathetic sharing of distress. Let us recall what we said when we were talking about time-experiences for God. We insisted that if the time-experience means nothing for God, an essential phase of our existence means nothing for him. We do not seek to limit the time-experience of the Divine to our scanty measures, but we do insist that if God's life is to mean anything to us, we are not to be pushed to one side with the summary statement that time means nothing for God. So with the problem of pain. We do not mean to say that the distresses of men shall be the same for God as for men, but we do insist that the distresses shall mean something for God. God must know how it looks from our point of view. If pain comes out of the relativity of our point of view, God must understand that relativity. Is it unreasonable to interpret God's Fatherhood toward men as

meaning at least as much as men's Fatherhood toward their children? If the wisest father can, through identifying himself sympathetically with his son, share the son's perplexities and distresses, can we expect less of God? God may indeed have modes of knowing to which we can never attain, but in those modes it is our right to ask that some trace of the children's distress enter. An earthly father may see much farther than the child. The child's woe may in itself seem trifling in the light of the father's wisdom, but that does not change the fact that pain is pain and the duty of the father to strive to see the distress as the child sees it. That is what fatherhood means for us on earth. That is what it must mean for the Father in heaven.

If we are to reach final peace in our thought of God, we shall have to bind God and men together as parts of one vast organism. I fear that much of what I have said will lend itself to the interpretation of God as standing over against men, concerned, after all, not to sacrifice too much in getting close to men. The connection should be made more organic. Science has bound all the forces at work in the universe into one system of relationships. For scientific thought there is no force unrelated to that system. A change at one point means

a change everywhere. An explosion of a distant star would have effects on all other stars if it took thousands of years to reach them. The solar systems are finely balanced mechanisms. The philosopher avows that all thought must so work together as to make a logically consistent system. The student of society dreams of an ideal social order in which all men find their places in one organism of humanity.

The Christian has a right to bind God and men together in one organic relationship not merely for action back and forth, not merely for the sharing of ideas, but for the fellowship of feeling as well. Life must have the tingle of sensibility. We can think of the universe as a vast network of forces reaching out from God as the center. We can think of it as a mighty message uttering the Mind which is at the center. We can also picture it as a nervous system quivering with feeling. The feeling is a more intimate bond of union than deed or thought. The live nerve is the one that can feel. I would like to call attention to Professor Peabody's fine word about the Way and the Truth and the Life. Walking in the way of obedience leads to the knowledge of the Truth. The knowledge of the Truth issues in that fullness of feeling which is Life at its keenest and best.

We are in a sensitive universe. Touch men and the feeling runs to God. Is this a limitation on God? Is feeling a limitation? Are fineness and delicacy of sensitiveness limitation? Artists do not think so. To the artist, the friend, the father, the increasing sensitiveness of feeling brings joy even when it brings pain. The Christian comes after a while to realize that the greatest part of the pain which he suffers is not his, but God's. God is not sharing his pain as truly as he is sharing God's. Then he sees that in a measure he is privileged to share the suffering of the cross. It is cross-bearing together which provides the closest unions between man and man. It is cross-bearing which leads to the closest union between man and God. Moreover, pain is not the lasting phase of feeling, but joy. Joy abideth. Peace remaineth. The joy and peace that endure take their start from fellowship in sorrow. Pain is a limitation as a narrow path is limited. We cannot pass judgment till we see whither the path leads.

XXIV

CHRIST THE LAST WORD

THE argument of my chapters, such as it is, has no doubt seemed to the reader who has been patient enough to follow it through, to move now to one side and now to another. At one moment I have protested against the modern thought of a limited God, at another I have been willing to push those limitations farther, apparently, than the preachers of the finite God have pushed them. A remark or two may be in order then, in view of this apparent inconsistency.

First, I have always, at least in my own thinking, conceived of the divine limitations, as shown in the creation of a physical universe and the creation and conservation of a world of men, to be self-ratified as obligations expressing the moral nature of the Creator. If anyone is disturbed at the affront to kingly dignity of the Creator in the concessions suggested in the creation of this world, let him remember that even kings make concessions and enter into limitations with no loss to sovereign honor. In a constitutional monarchy they cannot be

kings without acceptance of the bonds of kingship. A moral Creator cannot create except under the limitations which moral life calls for.

Second, I have always tried to make out that the ethical and spiritual qualities of God are of more consequence for religion than what we call the metaphysical qualities. I am not of those who believe that God could essentially put aside metaphysical qualities to any radical extent, but he could in the creation of men act in a way different from that which he might act if he were consulting only his own will. If this involves a change in our doctrine of omnipotence, I confess that I am not concerned. I have no doubt that God could coerce a human will. I have no doubt also that such is not the rule of his dealing with men. The result of all dealing must be to set on high anew the moral absoluteness of God.

Third, and finally, Christ is the final word. We make much of Christ as God's Word for us. May it not be said also that Christ is the final Word for God himself? The aim of all God's training of men must be to bring out the Christ in men. The impulse must come, so to speak, from the Christ—or the Christly—in God. We say that God must always act out of the moral fullness of his nature. Why not say that God must always act out of the Christ-

nature? Professor Rufus M. Jones has said that one of the philosophic achievements of our time has been the emphasis on the concrete infinite. The expression seems at first like a contradiction in terms. An infinite ought to be an absolute infinite. Still, Dr. Jones seems to me to be right. A concrete infinite would be the only infinite which would appeal to living souls. So may we not say that in Christ we have the concrete moral nature of the Infinite? Then what the Christ-spirit in God calls for will appear. If there are limitations which God assumes, they are assumed in the spirit of Christ. If there are limitations which seem essential to the Divine Life, they are essential because of the moral nature of the Christlike God.

Is it a limitation of God to say that the Christ in him sums up all? We do not think so. If we have a Christian God, we have a moral fullness which outruns all our finite bounds, and yet, with all its absoluteness, comes back to its concrete revelation in Christ.

The Absolute God comes to concrete revelation in Christ. The Christ revelation is not just a revelation adapted to men's minds. It is that, but the Christ is the truth as to the inmost moral nature of God. What the Christ-nature of God calls for, we repeat, will be done.

To bring the Christ in man to expression is not limitation. To bring the Christ in God to expression is not limitation. We are dealing with moral expression, with that fullness of life which would indeed be limited if it could not utter itself. Christ utters God, and utterance is not limitation.

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